



THE ADVENTURES OF BLAKE & MORTIMER

Based on the characters of EDGAR P. JACOBS

Part 2

THE CURSE OF THE 30 PIECES OF SILVER

Jean Van Hamme

Antoine Aubin
Etienne Schréder



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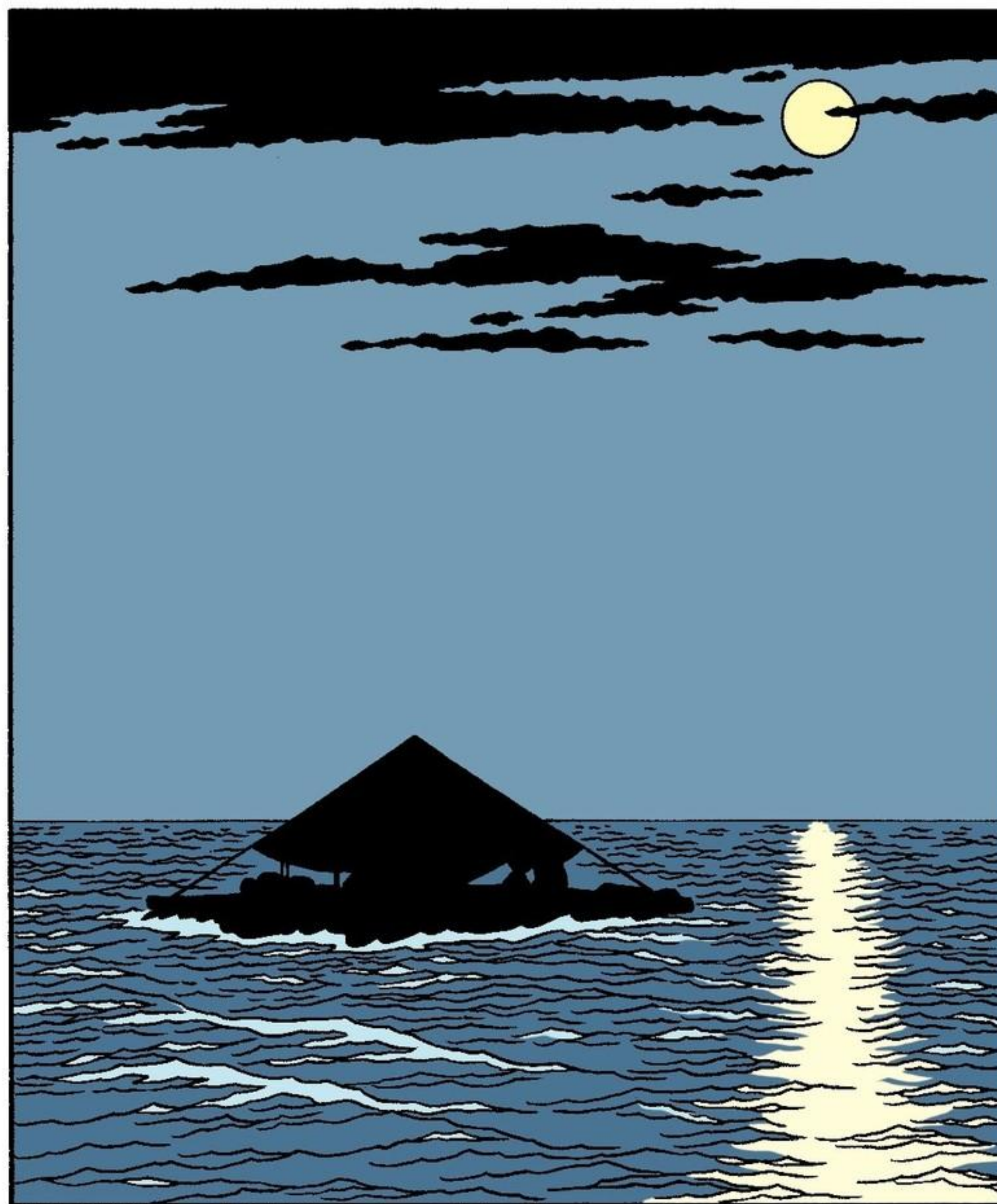
PART 2 THE GATE OF ORPHEUS

Script: Jean Van Hamme

Drawing: Antoine Aubin

Laurence Croix

Étienne Schréder



Based on the characters of
EDGAR P. JACOBS

FOLLOWING A RELATIVELY WEAK EARTHQUAKE, A YOUNG GOATHERD DISCOVERED THE RUINS OF A FIFTH-CENTURY CHRISTIAN CHAPEL ON THE MANI PENINSULA, THE SOUTHERNMOST PART OF THE PELOPONNESE.



INSIDE, IN ADDITION TO SOME MARVELLOUS FRESCOES, WAS A MANUSCRIPT FROM ONE NICODEMUS. WRITTEN IN ARAMAIC ON LEATHER SCROLLS, IT TOLD THE STORY OF A SMALL CHRISTIAN CONGREGATION'S FLIGHT AFTER THE BURNING OF ROME IN 64 AD. AND OF HOW ITS MEMBERS SETTLED ON ONE OF THE GREEK ISLANDS.



THERE WAS ALSO, WITHIN A LEAD RELIQUARY, A SILVER COIN BEARING THE PORTRAIT OF EMPEROR TIBERIUS. ACCORDING TO NICODEMUS'S WRITINGS, IT WAS ONE OF THE 30 DENARII GIVEN TO JUDAS ISCARIOT BY THE PRIESTS OF THE TEMPLE OF SOLOMON FOR HANDING JESUS OVER TO THE ROMANS.



STILL ACCORDING TO THE MANUSCRIPT, THE RENEGADE APOSTLE'S ATTEMPT TO COMMIT SUICIDE HAD FAILED AND, AFTER WANDERING FOR A LONG TIME, HE HAD COME TO SPEND HIS LAST DAYS AMONG NICODEMUS'S COMMUNITY. HE WAS THEN BURIED IN AN UNKNOWN LOCATION WITH HIS REMAINING 29 PIECES OF SILVER.



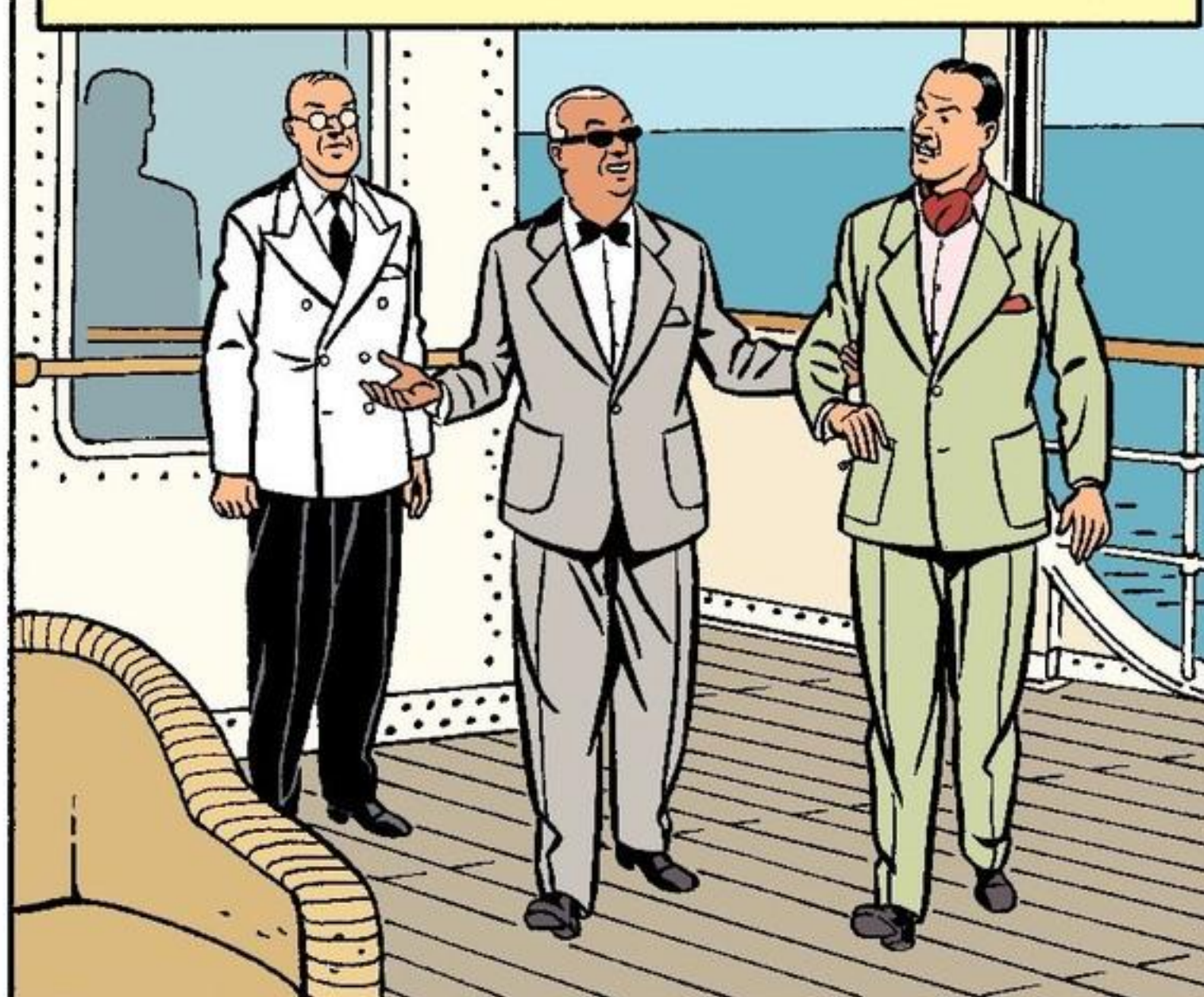
DR MARKOPOULOS, CHIEF CURATOR OF THE NATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM OF ATHENS, AND HIS ASSISTANT AND NIECE ELENI, CALLED UPON PHILIP MORTIMER—WHOSE REPUTATION AS AN AMATEUR ARCHAEOLOGIST EXTENDS WELL BEYOND THE BORDERS OF GREAT-BRITAIN—to HELP THEM SOLVE THE MYSTERY.



MEANWHILE, IN THE UNITED STATES, A MYSTERIOUS HELICOPTER-BORNE COMMANDO GROUP BROKE "COLONEL" OLRİK OUT OF THE PENITENTIARY WHERE HE'D BEEN SERVING HIS TIME SINCE THE BUSINESS WITH THE LOS ALAMOS ATOMIC BOMBS*. THE ASSISTANCE OF CAPTAIN FRANCIS BLAKE, COMMANDER OF M15, WAS REQUESTED BY HIS OLD FRIEND JOHN CALLOWAY, HEAD OF THE FBI'S OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT IN WASHINGTON.



BUT OLRİK WAS ALREADY FAR AWAY, SAILING THE ATLANTIC ON BOARD THE ARAX. THE YACHT BELONGED TO BELOS BELUKIAN, A FABULOUSLY WEALTHY ARMENIAN BUSINESSMAN WHO'D HAD OLRİK FREED IN ORDER TO RECRUIT HIM. BELUKIAN WAS, IN FACT, COUNT RAINER VON STAHL, A FORMER SS OFFICER WHO VANISHED DURING THE COLLAPSE OF NAZI GERMANY IN 1945—AFTER APPROPRIATING THE NAZI WAR TREASURE THAT ADOLF HITLER HAD ORDERED HIM TO HIDE IN AUSTRIA.



VON STAHL'S GOAL WAS TO BE THE FIRST TO FIND JUDAS'S GRAVE AND TAKE THE 30 PIECES OF SILVER FOR HIMSELF. HE BELIEVED THEY WERE FILLED WITH AN EVIL POWER THAT WOULD ALLOW HIM TO RULE OVER THE WORLD. DESPITE A CERTAIN SCEPTICISM, OLRİK AGREED TO ENTER HIS SERVICE, AS MUCH OUT OF GREED AS BECAUSE THE PROSPECT OF ONCE AGAIN FACING HIS OLD ENEMY MORTIMER APPEALED TO HIM.



*SEE THE STRANGE ENCOUNTER.

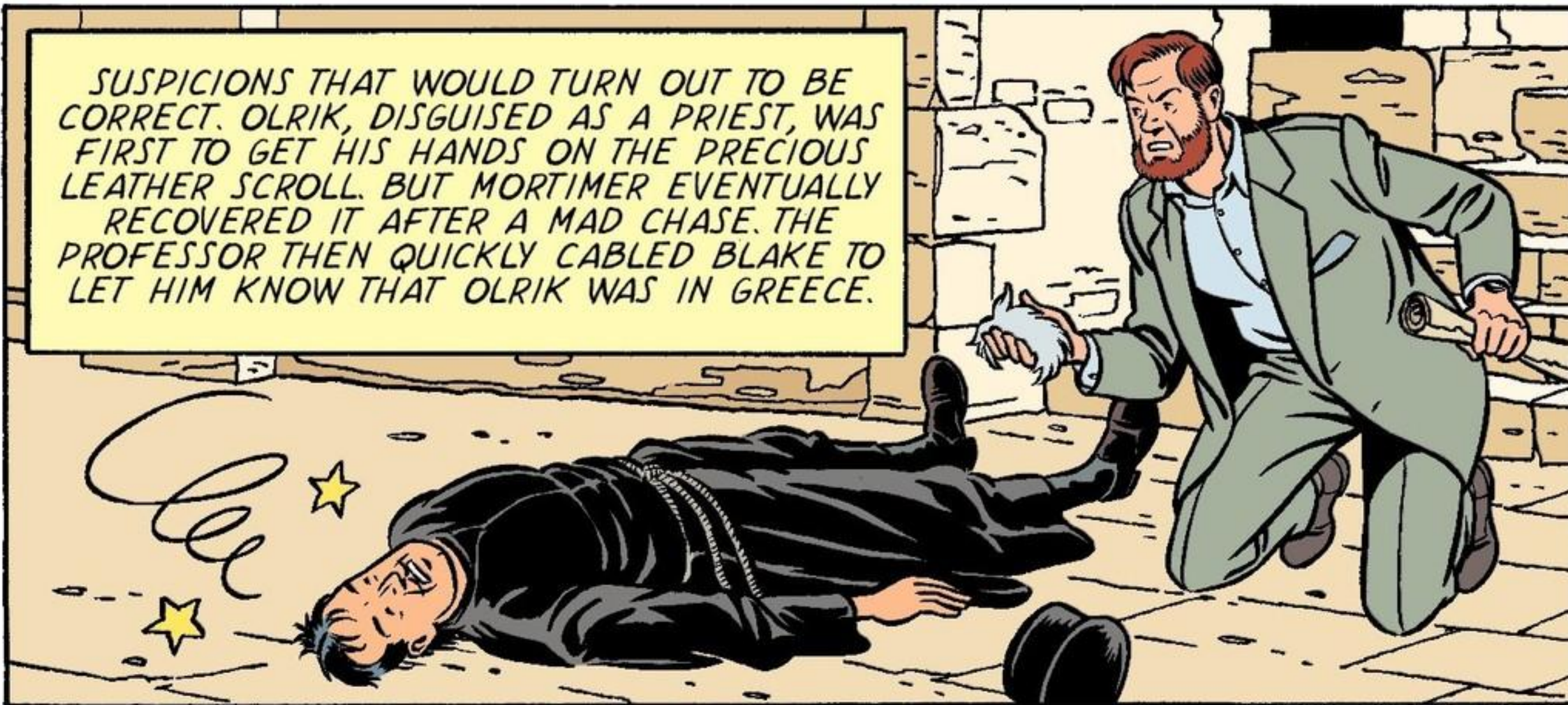
AFTER ESCAPING A KILLER IN ATHENS SENT BY VON STAHL, MORTIMER TRAVELLED TO THE MANI PENINSULA WITH ELENI AND HER AMERICAN FIANCE JIM RADCLIFF, A REPORTER WITH THE PHILADELPHIA CHRONICLE, THE NEWSPAPER THAT WAS FUNDING THEIR RESEARCH IN EXCHANGE FOR AN EXCLUSIVE ON THE STORY.



THEIR FIRST OBJECTIVE WAS TO FIND THE MISSING PART OF NICODEMUS'S MANUSCRIPT, WHICH WOULD GIVE THEM THE NAME OF THE ISLAND ON WHICH THE LITTLE COMMUNITY HAD FOUND REFUGE. MORTIMER SUSPECTED THE YOUNG GOATHERD OF KEEPING IT IN THE HOPES OF SELLING IT TO A COLLECTOR.



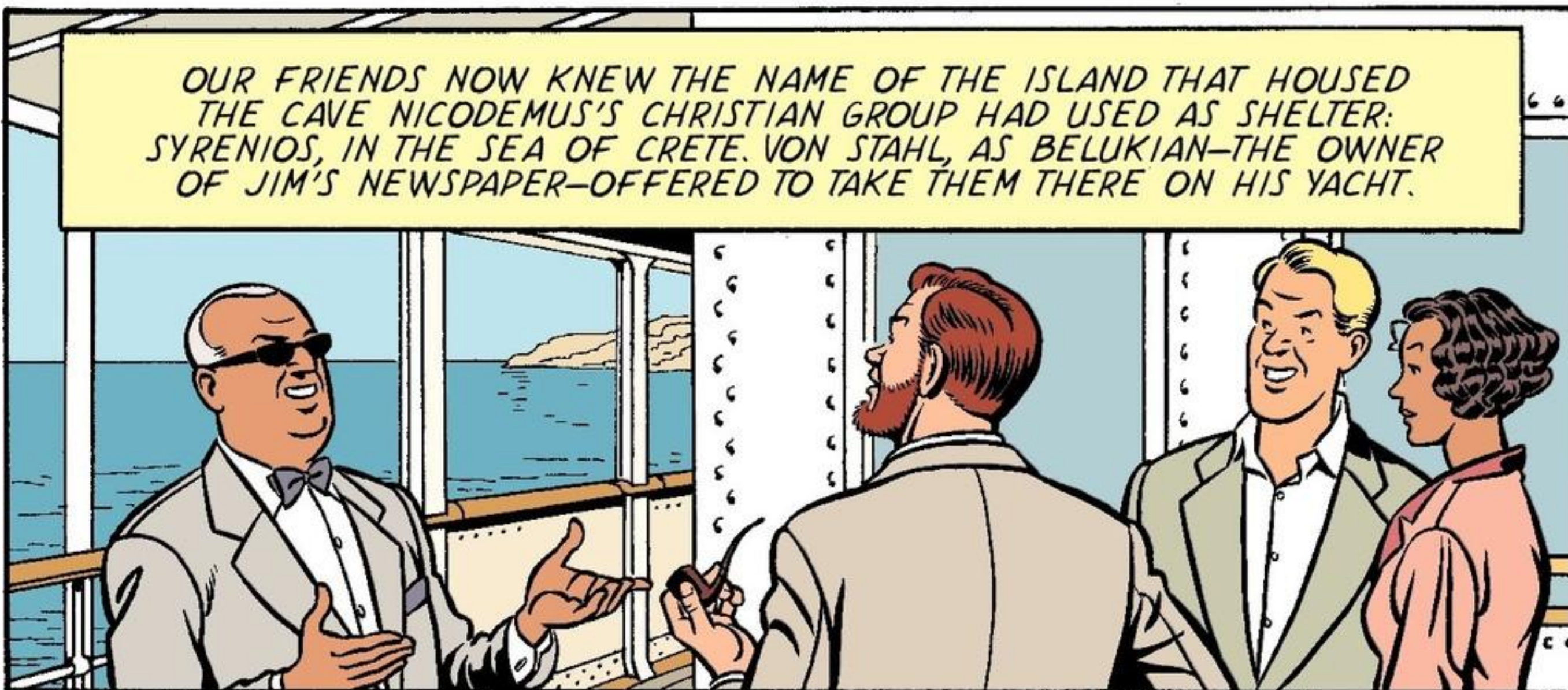
SUSPICIONS THAT WOULD TURN OUT TO BE CORRECT. OLRİK, DISGUISED AS A PRIEST, WAS FIRST TO GET HIS HANDS ON THE PRECIOUS LEATHER SCROLL. BUT MORTIMER EVENTUALLY RECOVERED IT AFTER A MAD CHASE. THE PROFESSOR THEN QUICKLY CABLED BLAKE TO LET HIM KNOW THAT OLRİK WAS IN GREECE.



THE TRIO ACCEPTED, THUS UNKNOWNLY THROWING THEMSELVES INTO THE LION'S DEN. AND WHILE ELENI AND JIM WERE DRUGGED AND NEUTRALISED, MORTIMER FOUND HIMSELF A PRISONER IN THE COMPANY OF DR MARKOPOULOS, KIDNAPPED IN ATHENS BY THE GOONS OF THE FORMER SS STANDARTENFÜHRER.



OUR FRIENDS NOW KNEW THE NAME OF THE ISLAND THAT HOUSED THE CAVE NICODEMUS'S CHRISTIAN GROUP HAD USED AS SHELTER: SYRENİOS, IN THE SEA OF CRETE. VON STAHL, AS BELUKIAN—THE OWNER OF JIM'S NEWSPAPER—OFFERED TO TAKE THEM THERE ON HIS YACHT.



HAVING MANAGED TO CUT HIS BONDS AND LEAVE THE CABIN, THE PROFESSOR ATTEMPTED TO LEAVE THE ARAX ABOARD A SMALL INFLATABLE LIFEBOAT.



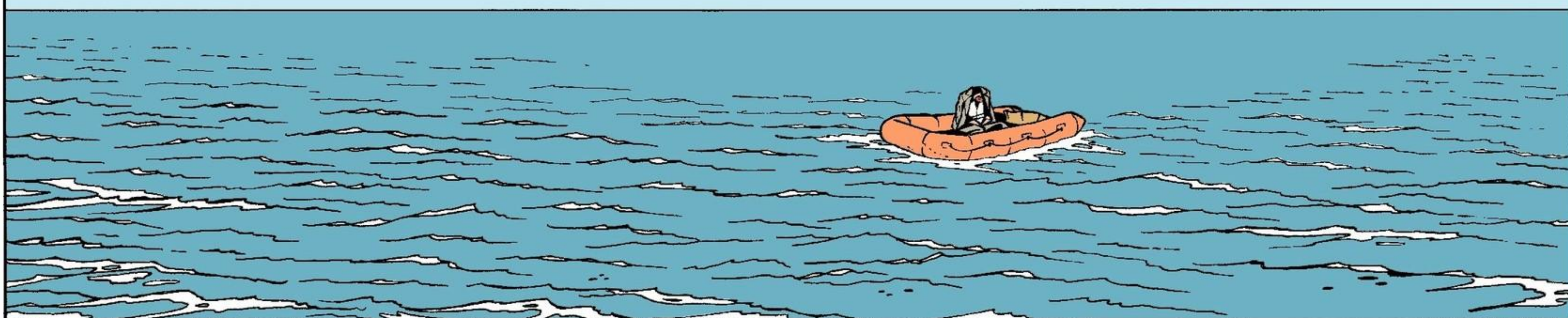
BUT OLRİK, HIS MACHIAVELLIAN MIND HAVING FORESEEN HIS OLD NEMESIS' ATTEMPT, HAD REMOVED THE OARS AND PROVISIONS FROM THE SMALL CRAFT.



Away from all sea lanes as we are, you won't last long, Mortimer. Give my best to Poseidon! Ha! Ha! Ha!



AFTER THE NIGHT, AN INTERMINABLE DAY HAS GONE BY. NOT ONE SHIP, NOT EVEN THE TINIEST RAFT, HAS APPEARED ON THE HORIZON.



THEN COMES A SECOND NIGHT...



... AND A SECOND DAY UNDER A SCORCHING SUN. HIS LIPS CRACKED, TORMENTED BY AN UNBEARABLE THIRST, MORTIMER FEELS HOPE SEEPING AWAY FROM HIM.

That cursed Olrik was right: I won't make it another day.

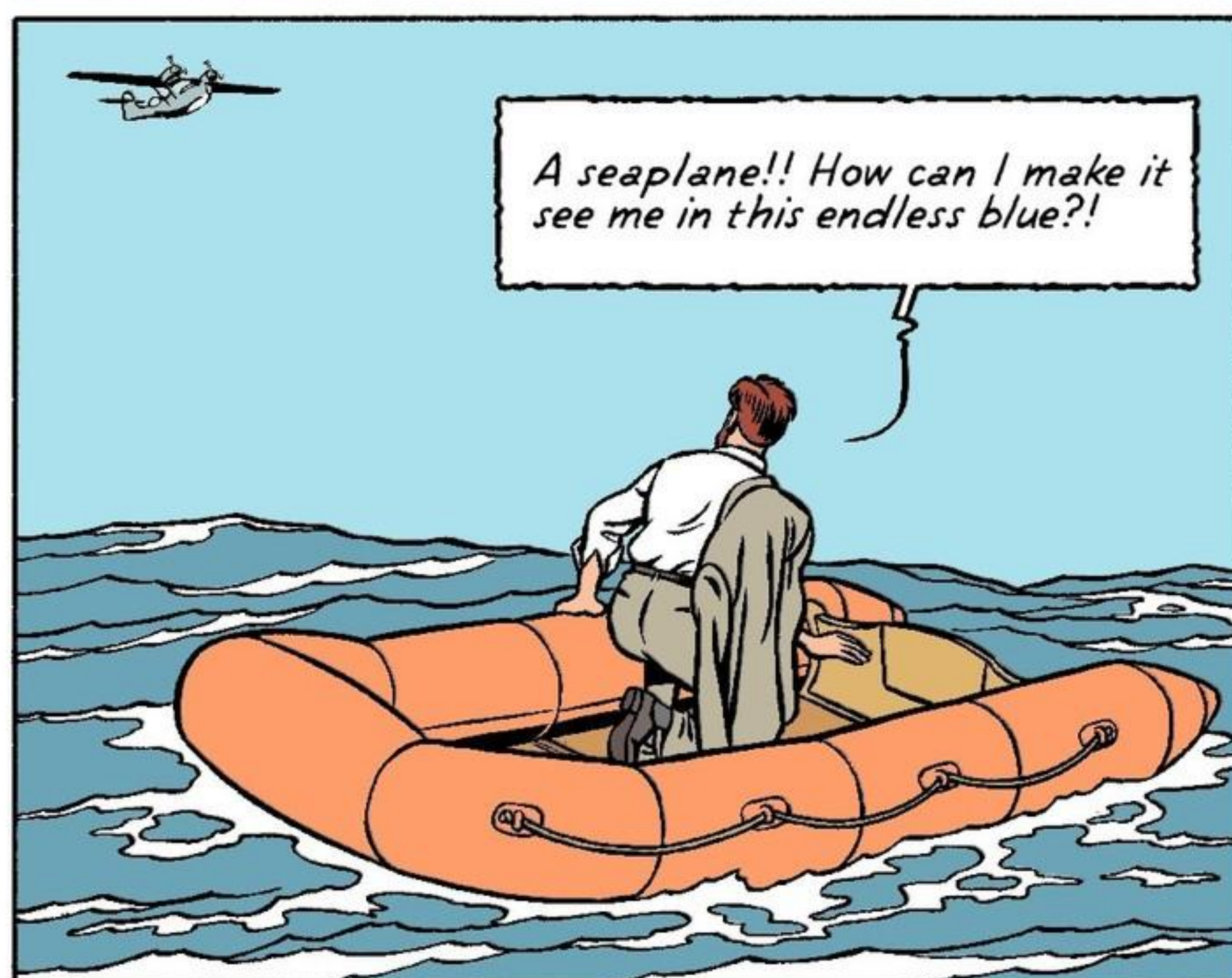


VRRRRR

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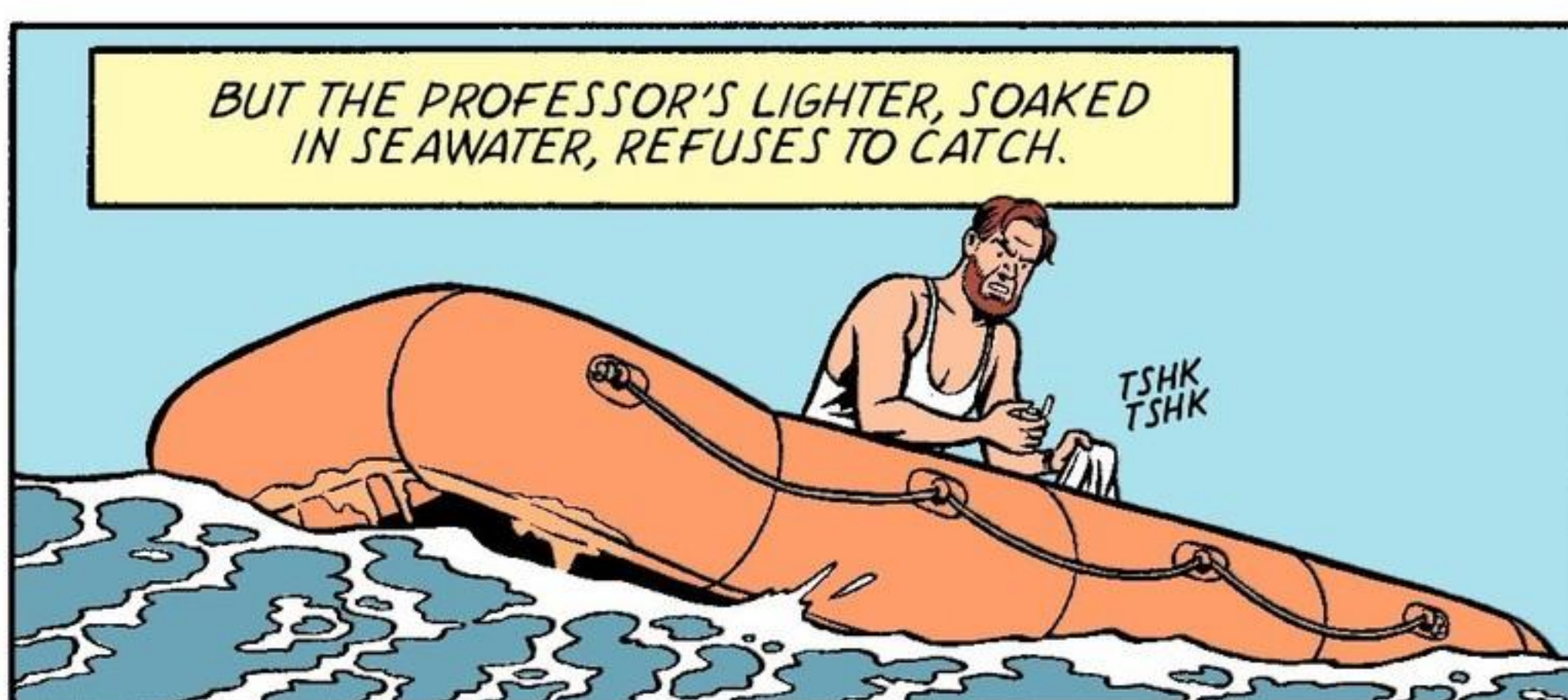
A seaplane!! How can I make it see me in this endless blue?!



Smoke! I must make smoke! My shirt, my jacket... It should work!



BUT THE PROFESSOR'S LIGHTER, SOAKED IN SEAWATER, REFUSES TO CATCH.

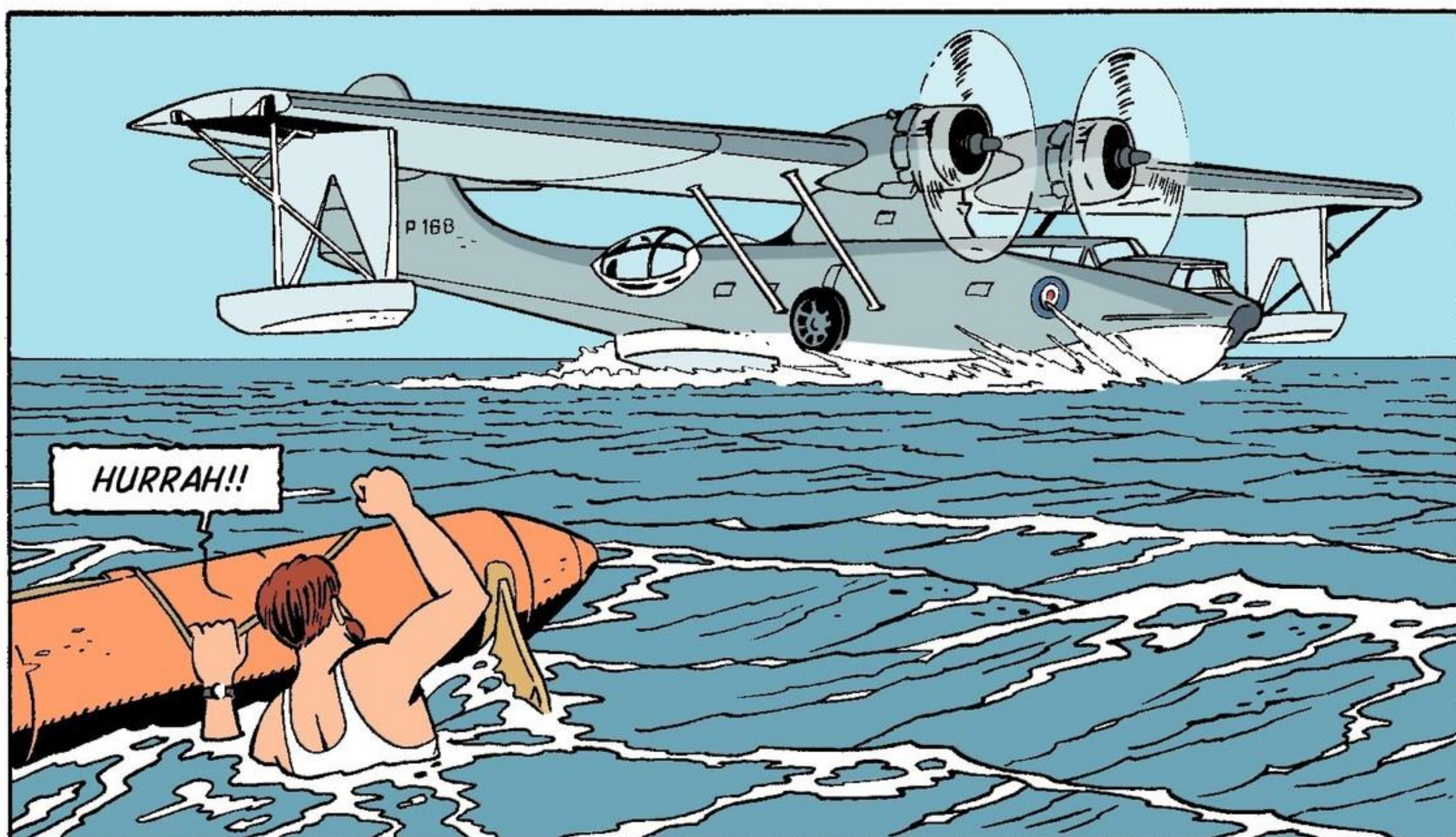
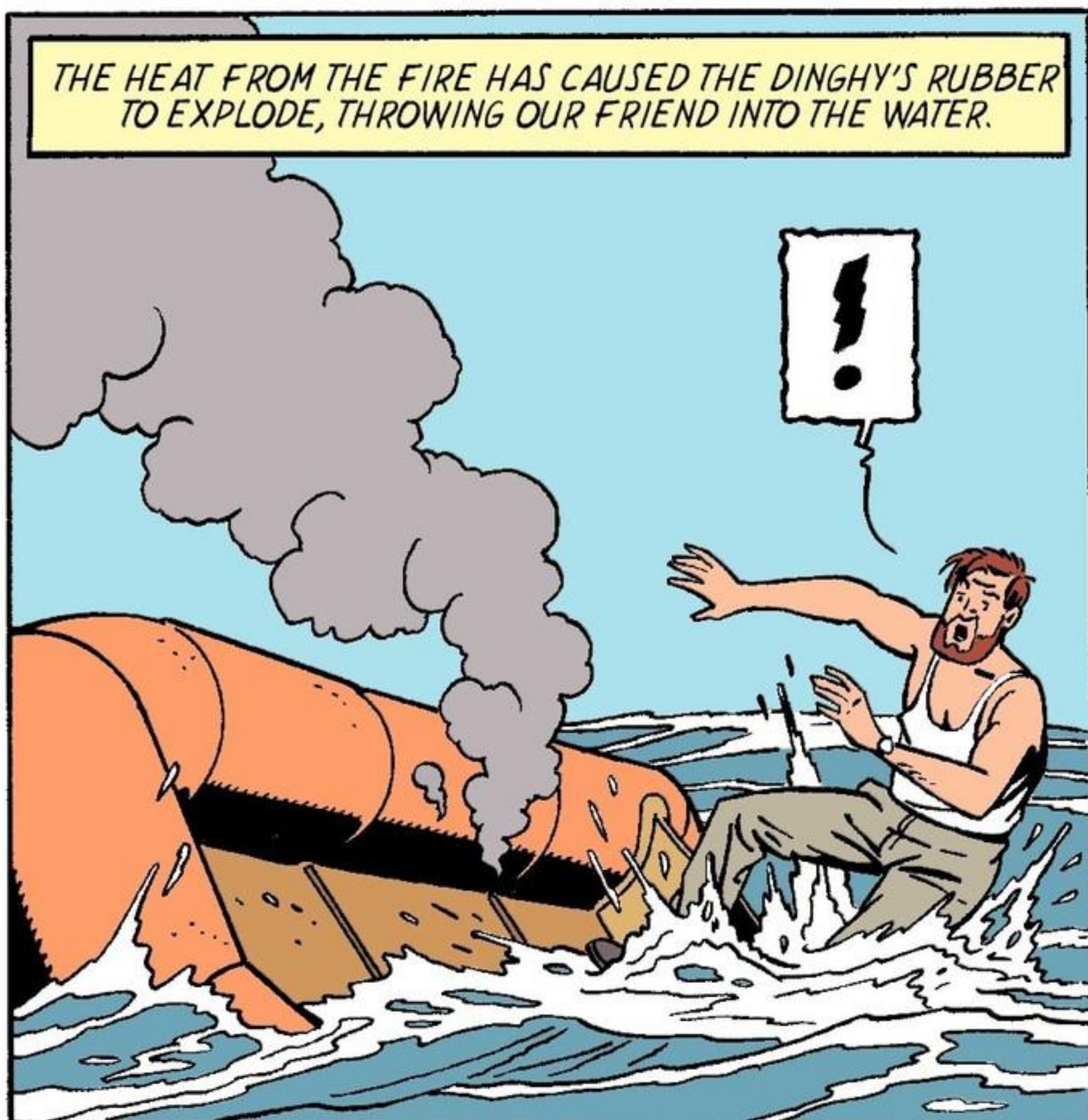


Come on, for the love of God, catch! Catch!...



At last!!...





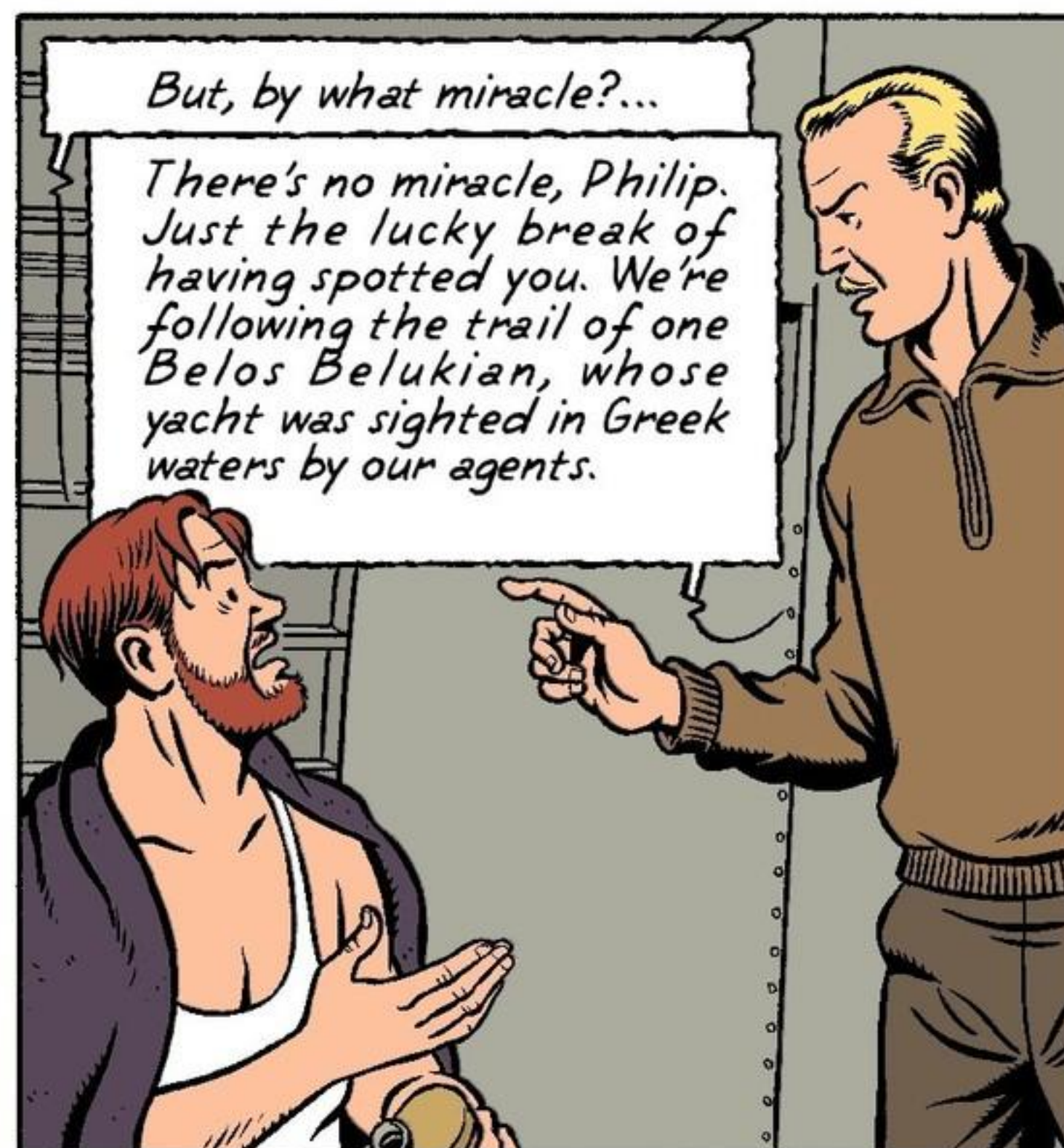


Don't drink too fast, old boy. You'll choke. I suppose you remember John Calloway and his deputy, Jessie Wingo?



How could I not recognise the lovely naiad who saved my life*?

I'm glad to see you safe and sound, Professor.



But, by what miracle?...

There's no miracle, Philip. Just the lucky break of having spotted you. We're following the trail of one Belos Belukian, whose yacht was sighted in Greek waters by our agents.



We have good reason to believe that it was Belukian who broke Olrik out of the Jacksonville penitentiary.

Which your telegram informing me of Olrik's presence in the Peloponnese seems to confirm.

Olrik is, indeed, aboard the Arax.

AND WHILE THE SEAPLANE FLIES ON, MORTIMER RECOUNTS HIS TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS TO HIS COMPANIONS, WHO LISTEN INTENTLY.



Fantastic! I'll tell the pilot to make for the island of Syrenios.

If we find Olrik on his yacht, Belukian will answer for it to the American justice system.

Be careful. Besides Olrik and his three prisoners, Belukian also has half a dozen heavily-armed men on board.



We suspected as much. As you can see, we didn't come alone.

Your men, Calloway?

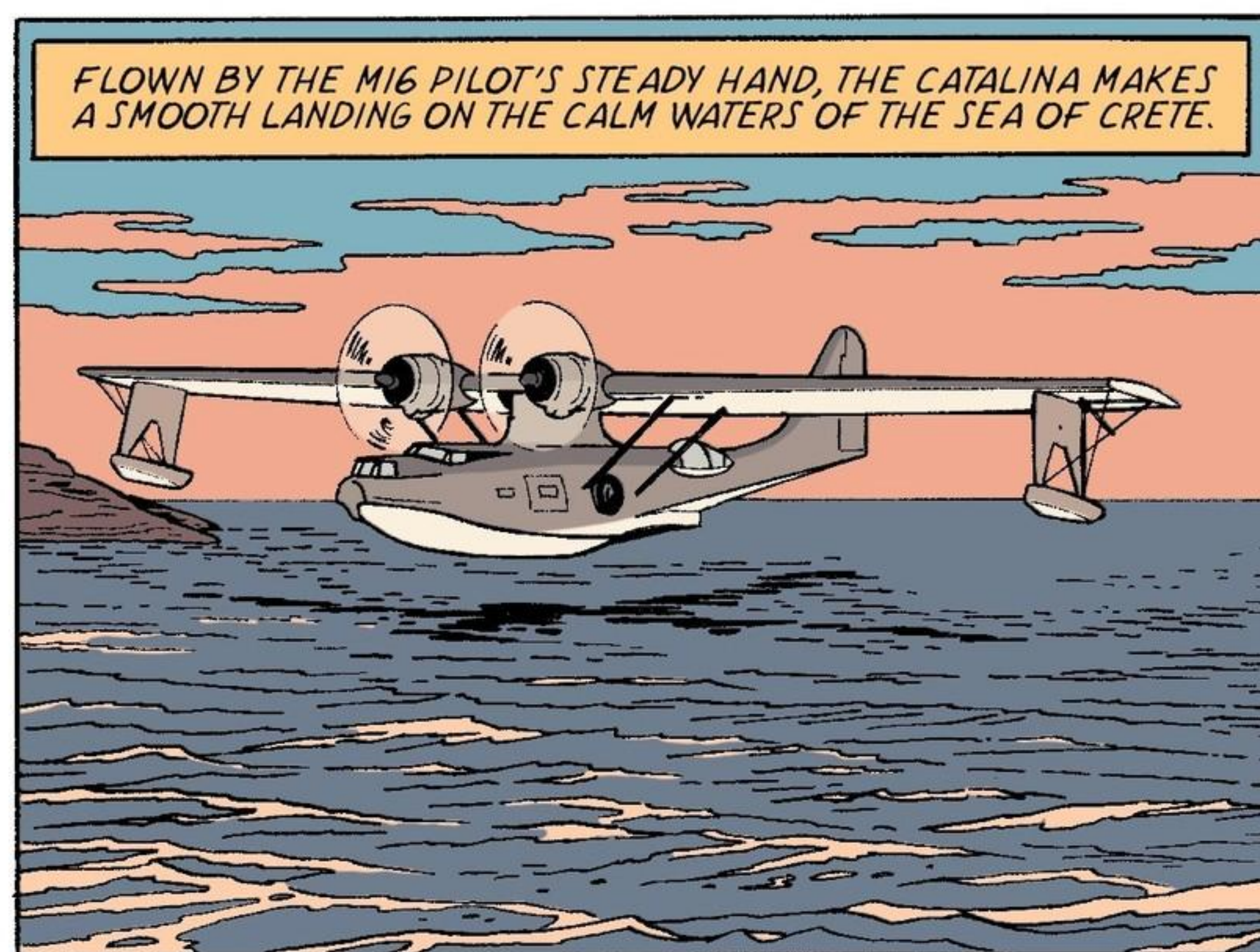
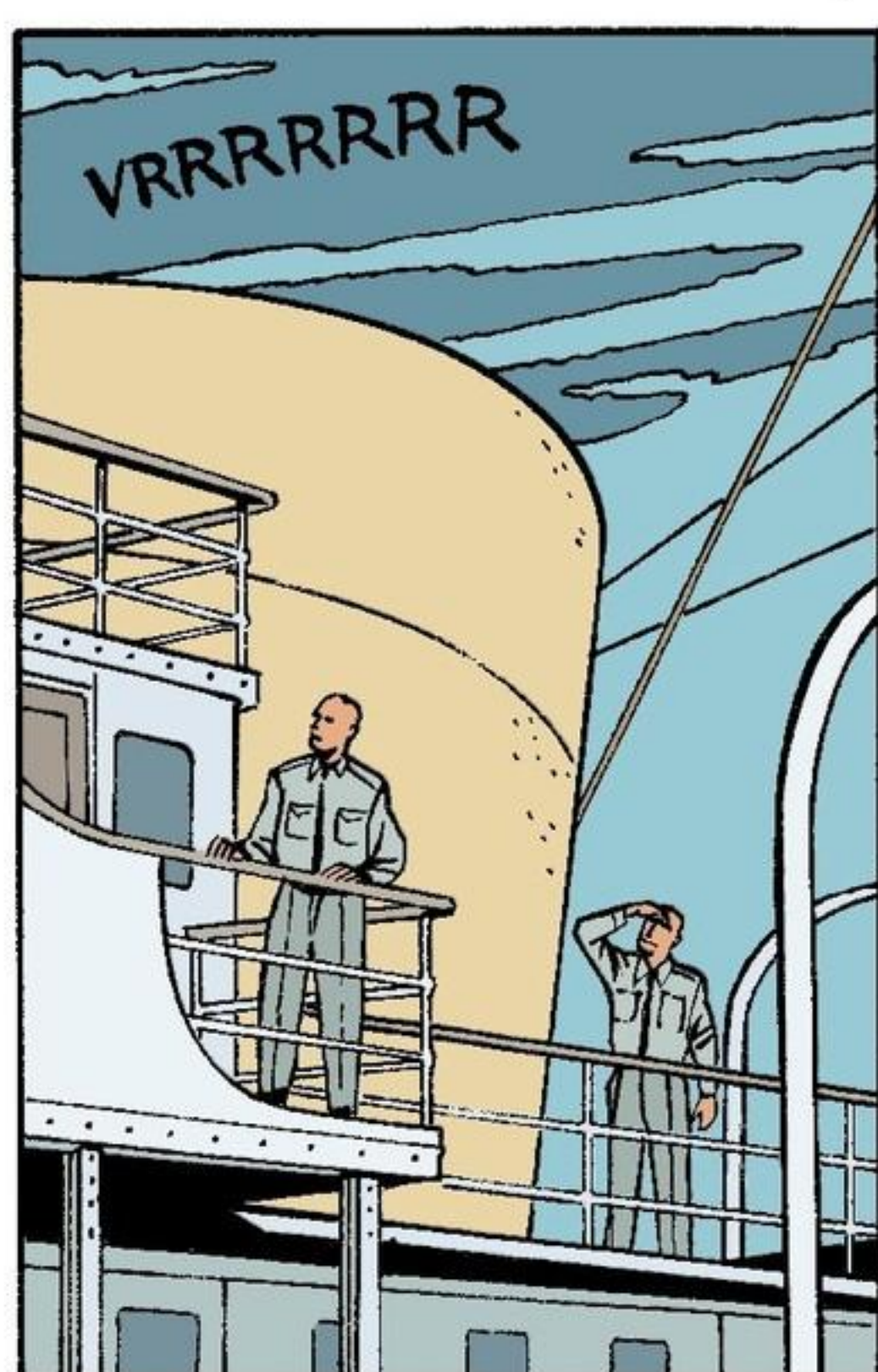


No. The FBI has no jurisdiction outside of US territory. These are elite commandos, all M16 agents.



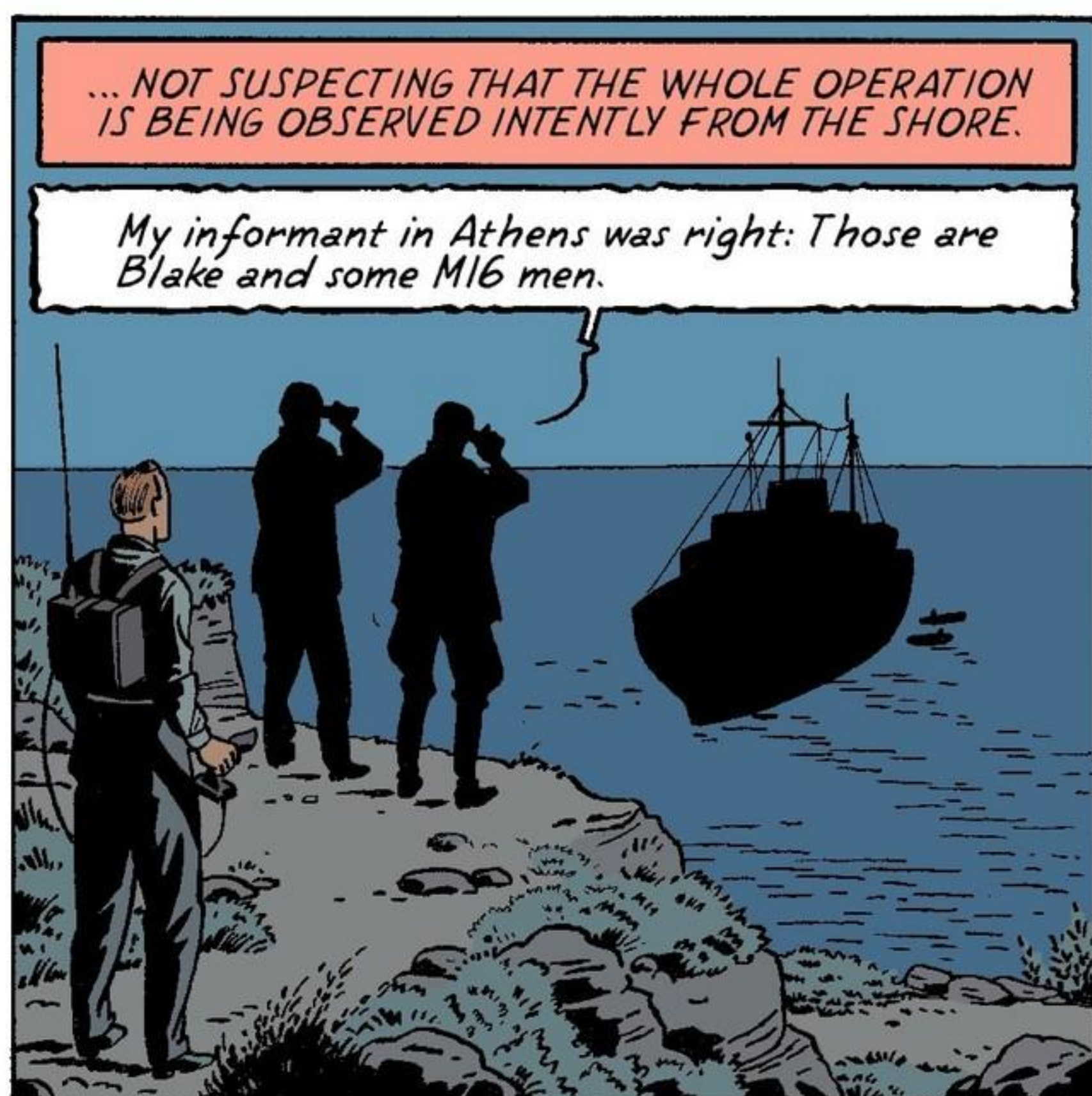
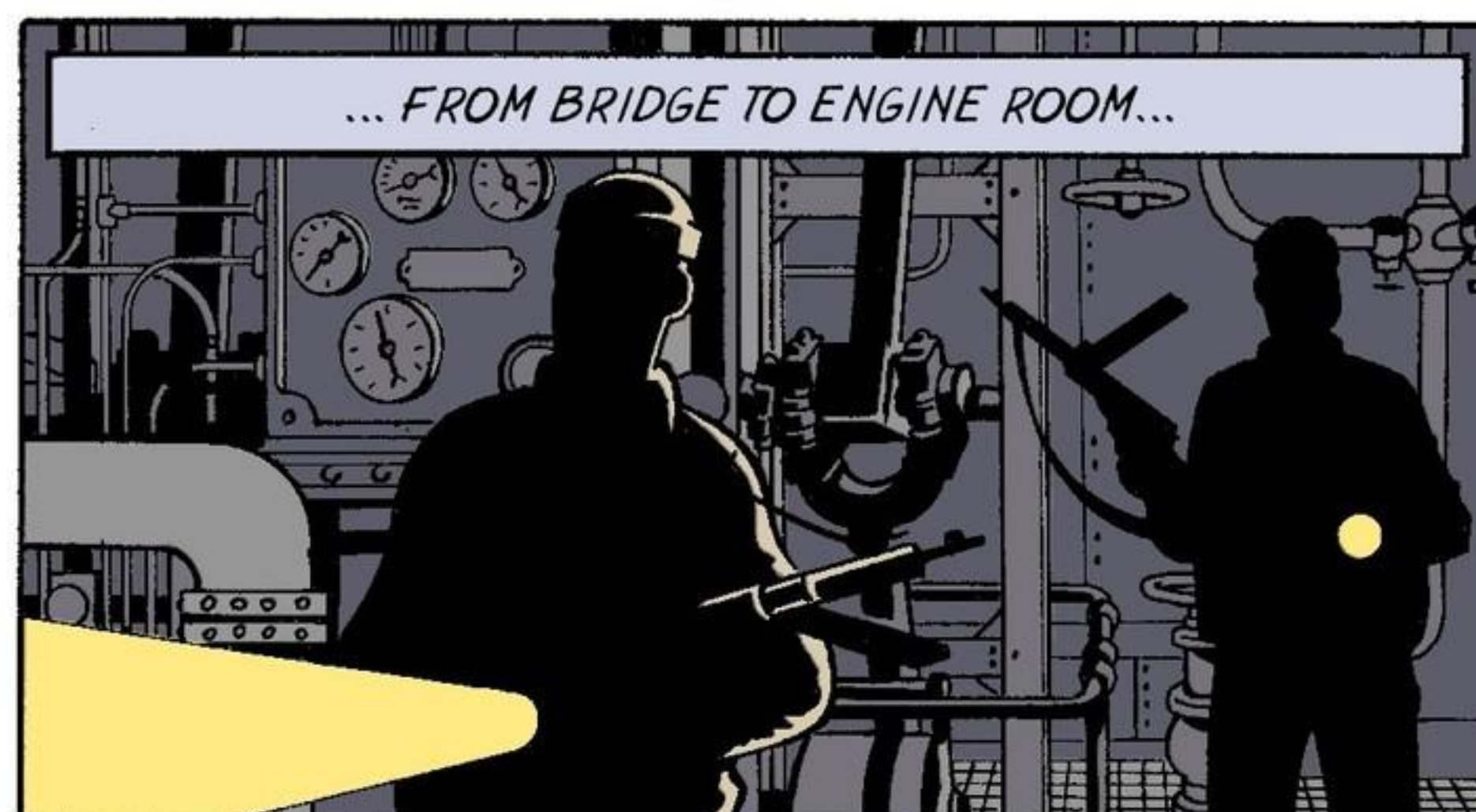
As you probably know, Philip, the Intelligence Service has remained very active in Greece since the end of the civil war in '49. So, my colleagues at M16 lent me this Catalina seaplane and the help of one of their shock teams.

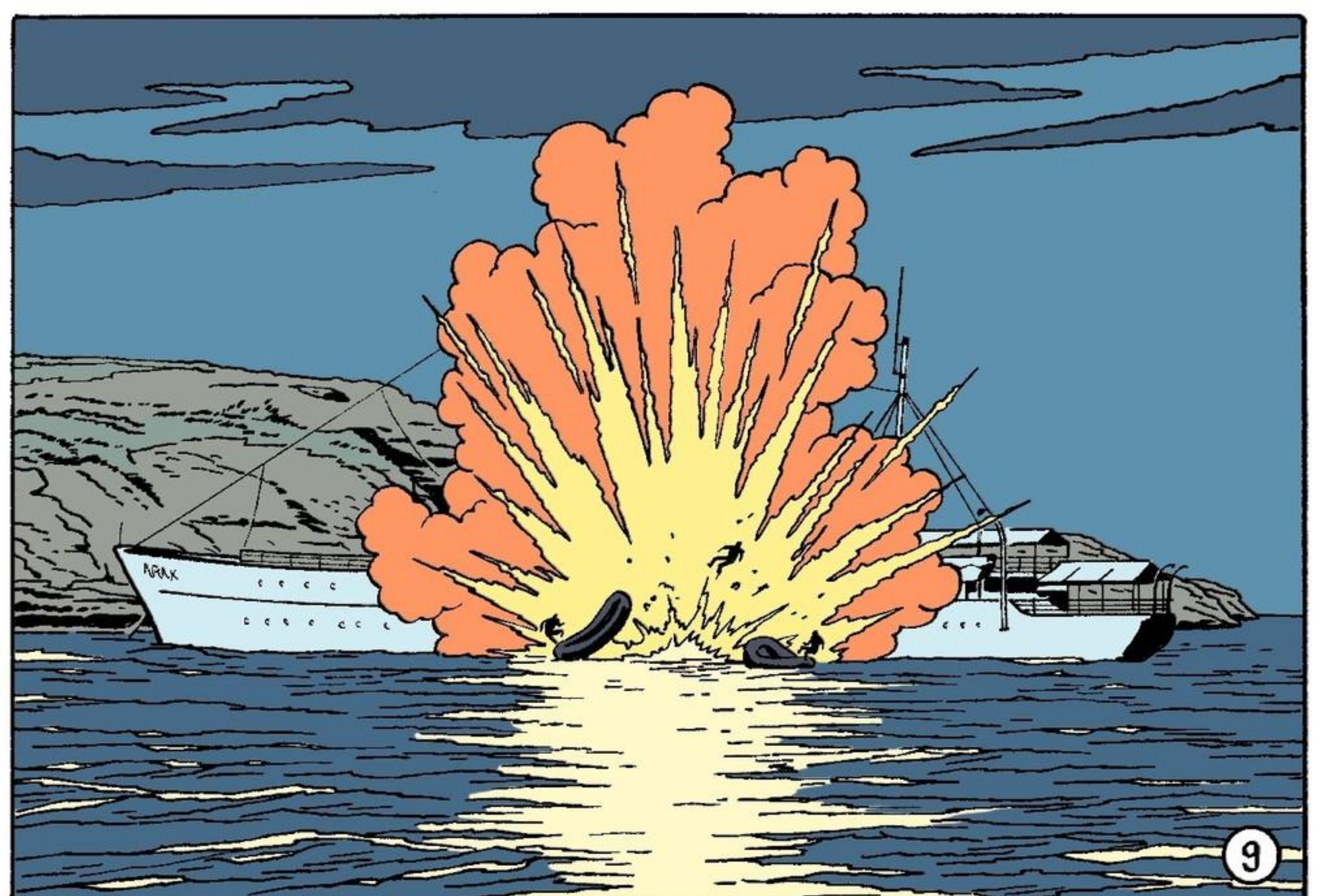
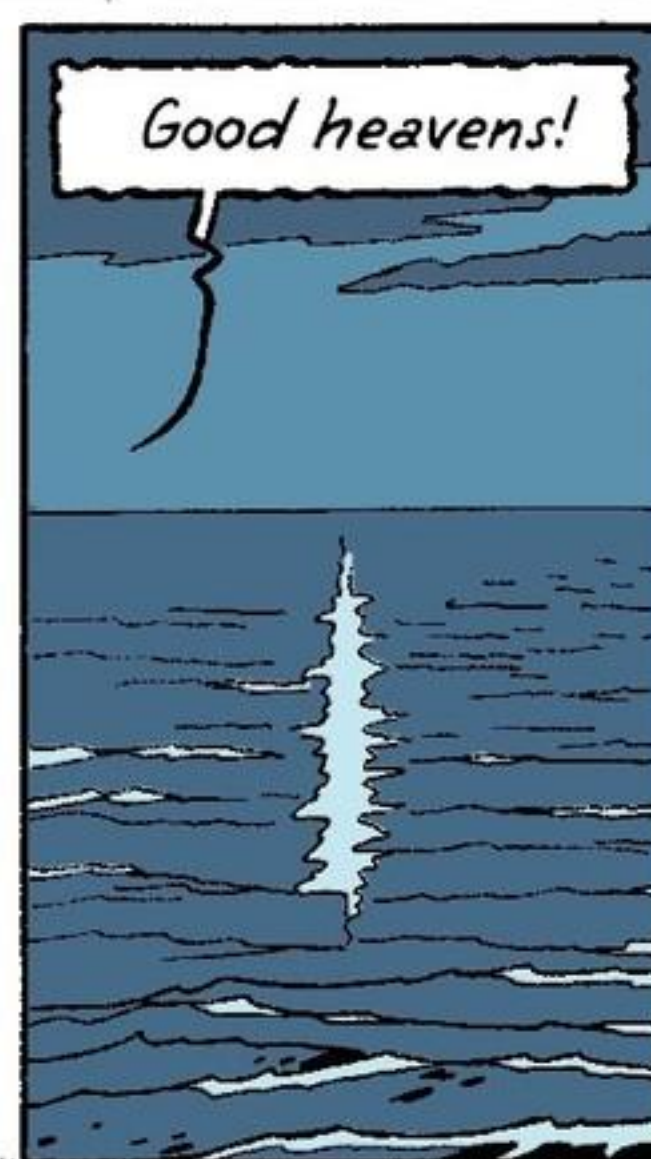
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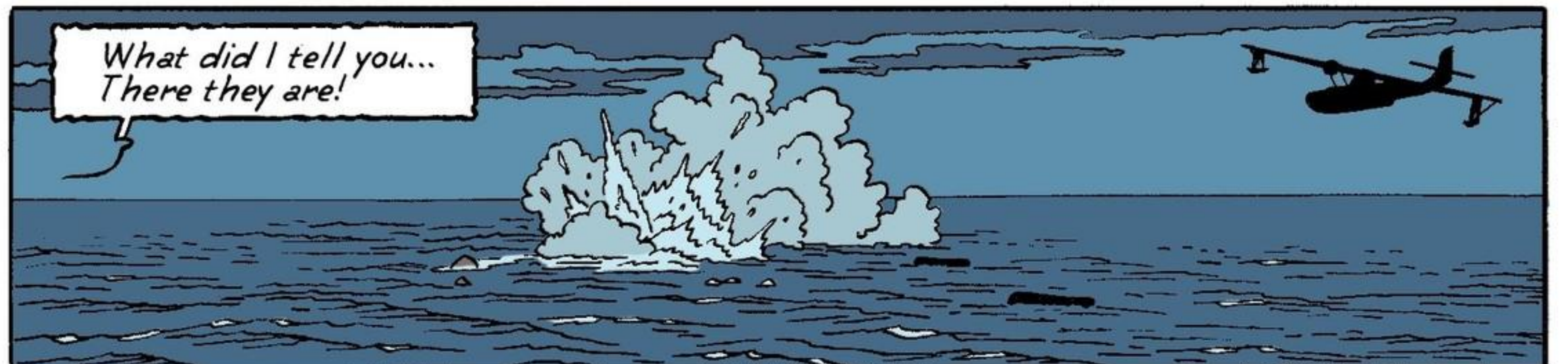
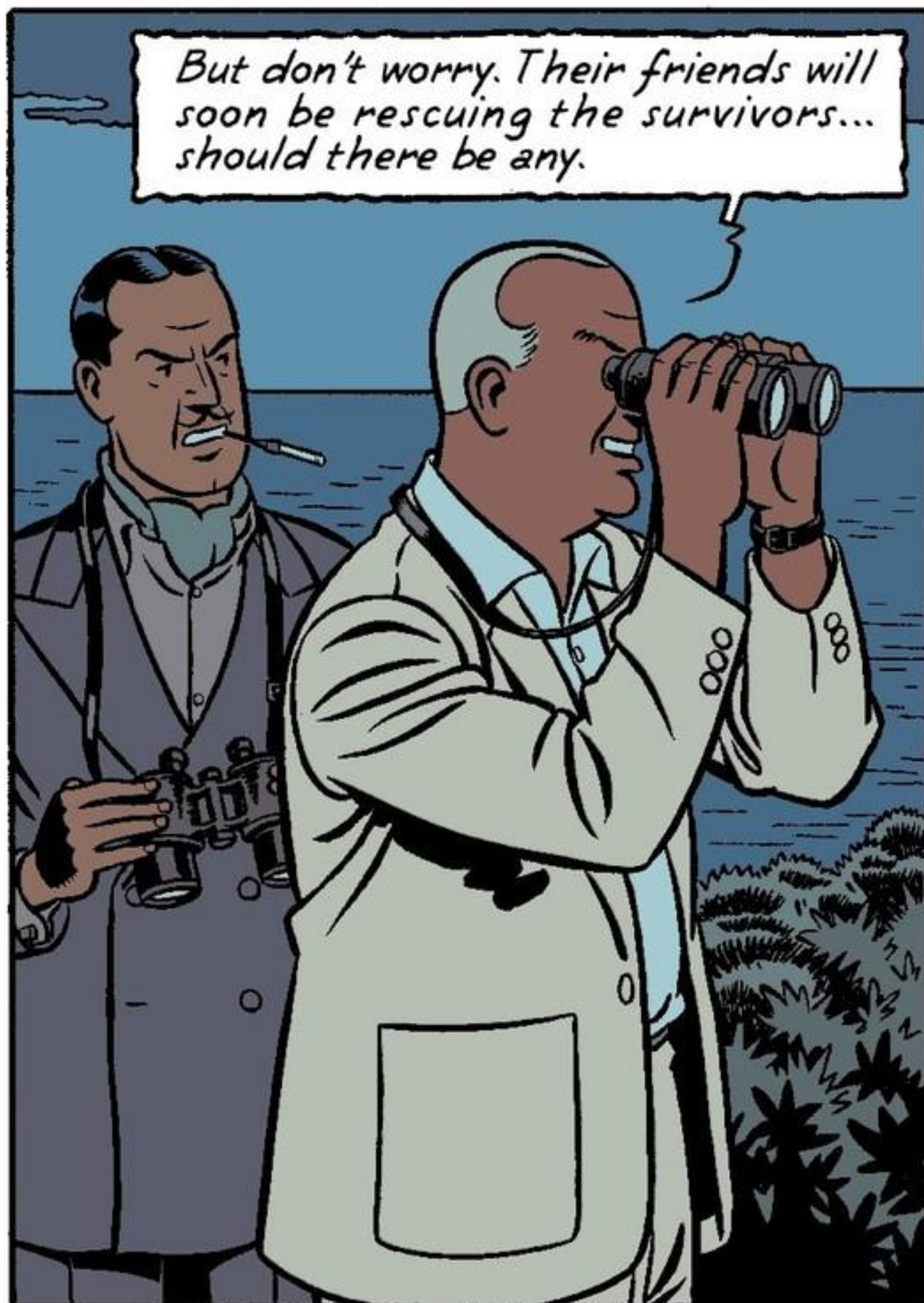


AND, AFTER A FEW HOURS OF WAITING...











Jim!!... Oh, my God!...

Don't worry about me, darling. Run! Try to find shelter in the village.



SHAKING WITH FEAR AND GRIEF, THE YOUNG GREEK ONCE AGAIN RACES OFF BLINDLY INTO THE NIGHT...



... PURSUED BY VON STAHL'S HENCHMEN...



... WHILE JIM, IN DIRE SHAPE, IS BROUGHT BACK ROUGHLY BEFORE OLRICK AND HIS EMPLOYER.

That's what you get for pointless heroics, Radcliff. As for your girlfriend, you know full well she doesn't have a hope of escaping us.



OUT OF BREATH, ELENI HIDES BEHIND A THORNY BUSH, TRYING HARD TO CALM THE POUNDING OF HER HEART...



... AND PRAYING THAT HER PURSUERS PASS BY WITHOUT SEEING HER AND LOSE HER TRAIL.



MEANWHILE, JESSIE AND MORTIMER HAVE ARRIVED AT THE SITE OF THE ATTACK AND DISCOVER A GRISLY SIGHT.

Lord have mercy!

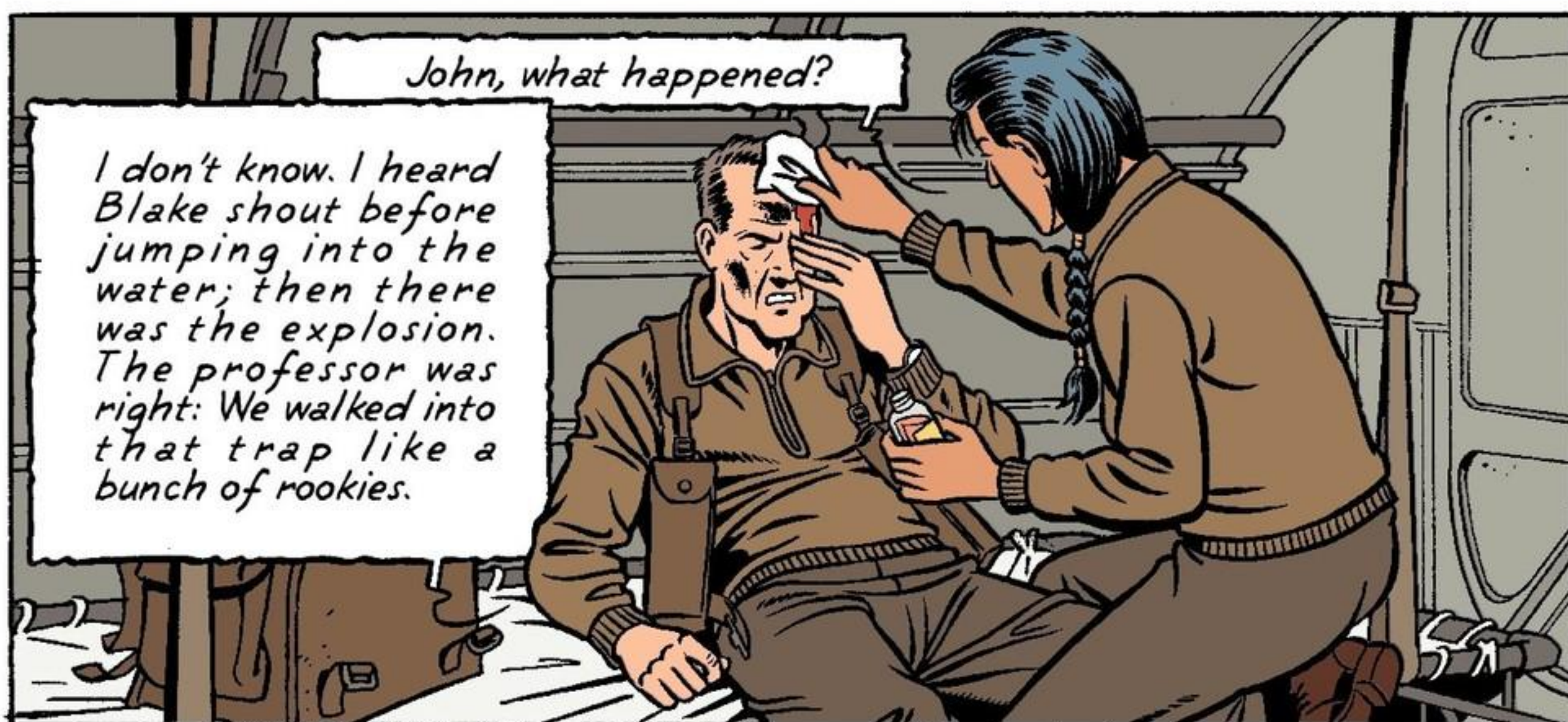


HEY! OVER HERE!...



GLIDING OVER THE WATER AT REDUCED SPEED, THE CATALINA RECOVERS, ONE BY ONE, THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMANDO HOLDING ON TO STILL-SMOKING DEBRIS.

BONG



John, what happened?

I don't know. I heard Blake shout before jumping into the water; then there was the explosion. The professor was right: We walked into that trap like a bunch of rookies.



HAVING MANAGED TO GET ONTO THE SECOND RAFT, THE COMMANDER OF THE TEAM IS LAST TO CLIMB ABOARD THE PLANE.



These two are dead. All the others are wounded, three of them seriously. We have to get back to Athens right away.

Blake?



Where's Blake?

I don't know. No one's seen him since the explosion.

He must have gone under, sucked in by the whirlpool caused by the yacht's sinking.

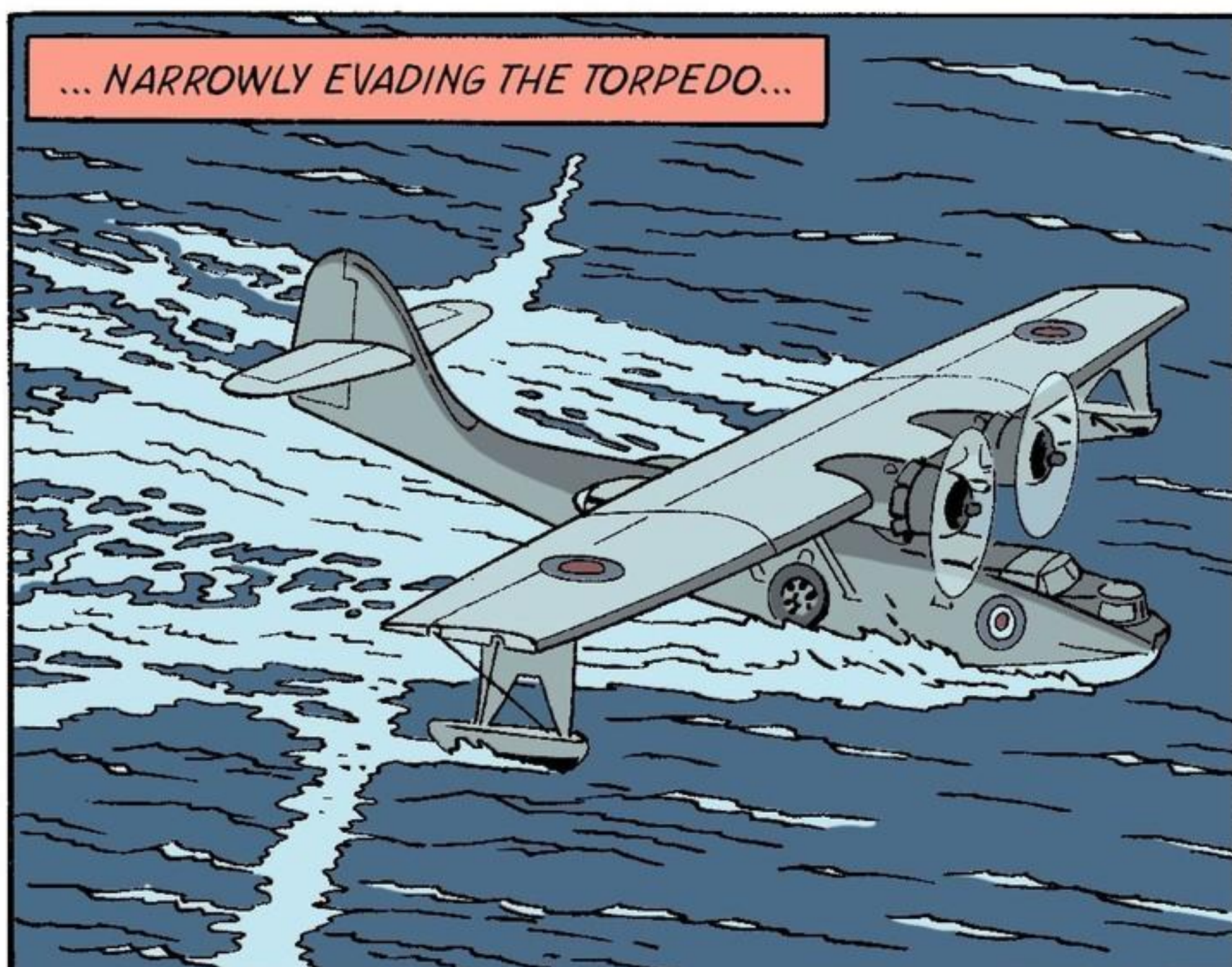
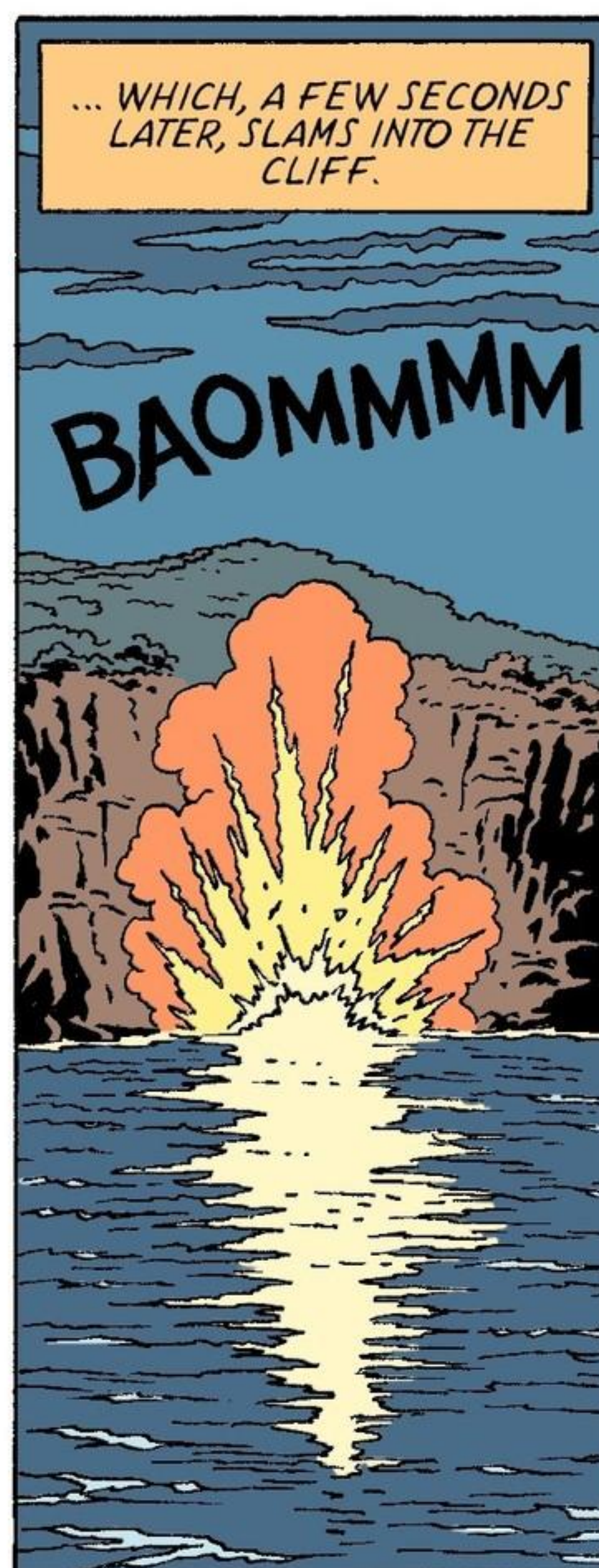
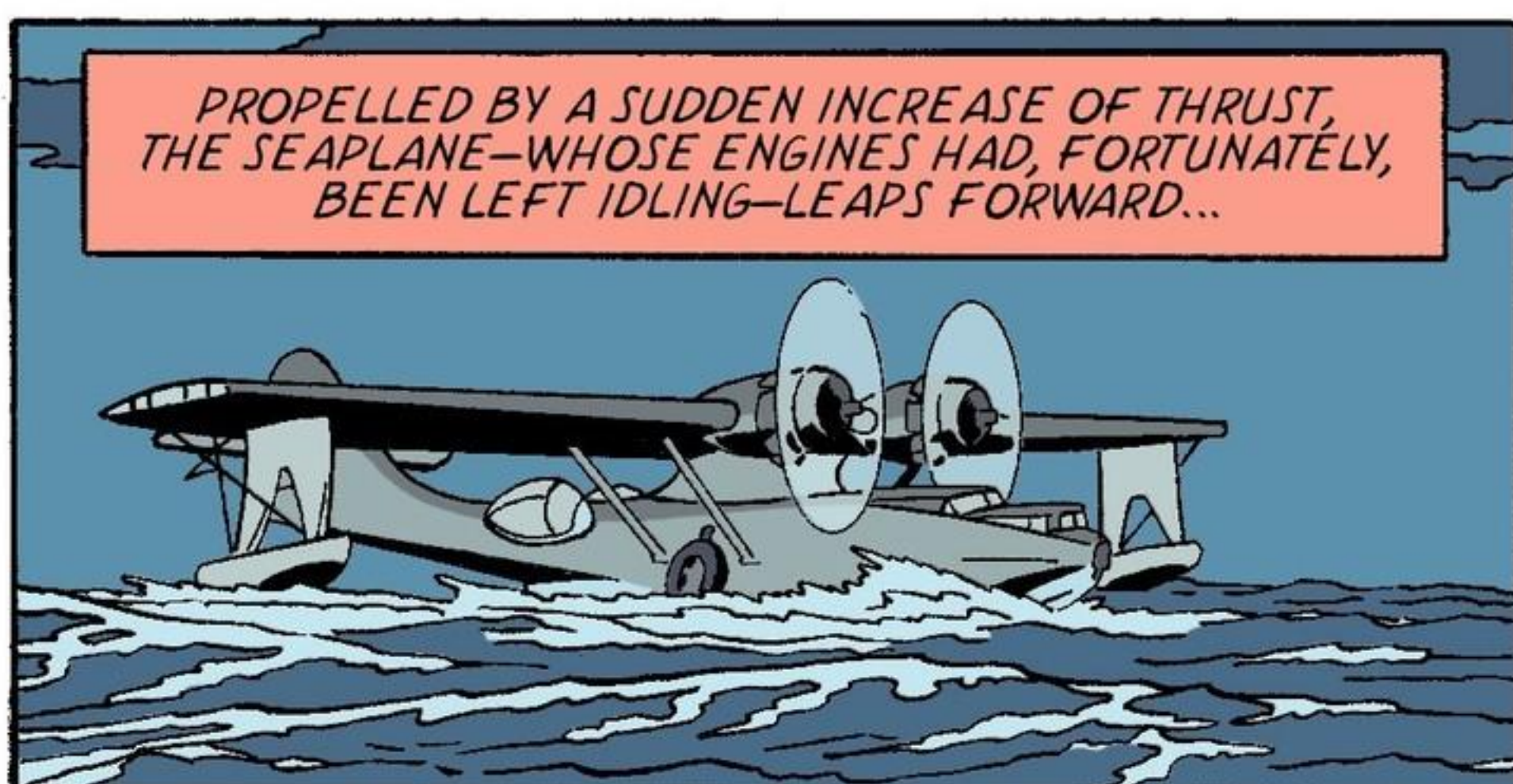


I'm going. Give me that projector.

You're still a bit weak, Professor. I'll go with you.



?!?



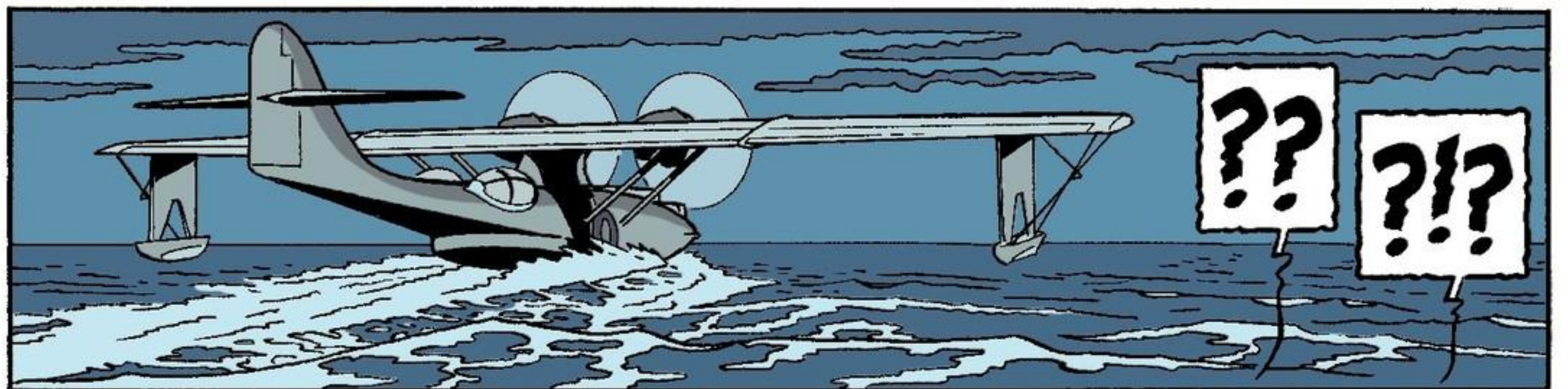


We're not waiting for the next torpedo. Let's go, Joe!

Hey! You have no right...



Shut up! I have every right, Mr FBI Special Agent. Blake is probably dead, the other two can handle themselves, and I'm thinking about my men. We make for Athens!



??

?!?



What?... They're leaving us?!?

They're just saving their lives. They made too easy a target.



But, what are we going to do? We have no weapons, no food, no money...

nothing.

We'll worry about that later, Jessie. The first thing we must do is find Blake. Back to rowing.



Heavens! There he is!!



Easy... He might have broken bones.



Thank God, he's alive! His pulse is almost regular. And aside from this bruise, he doesn't seem to have any injuries. Take your handkerchief, soak it in salt water and improvise a bandage for him.

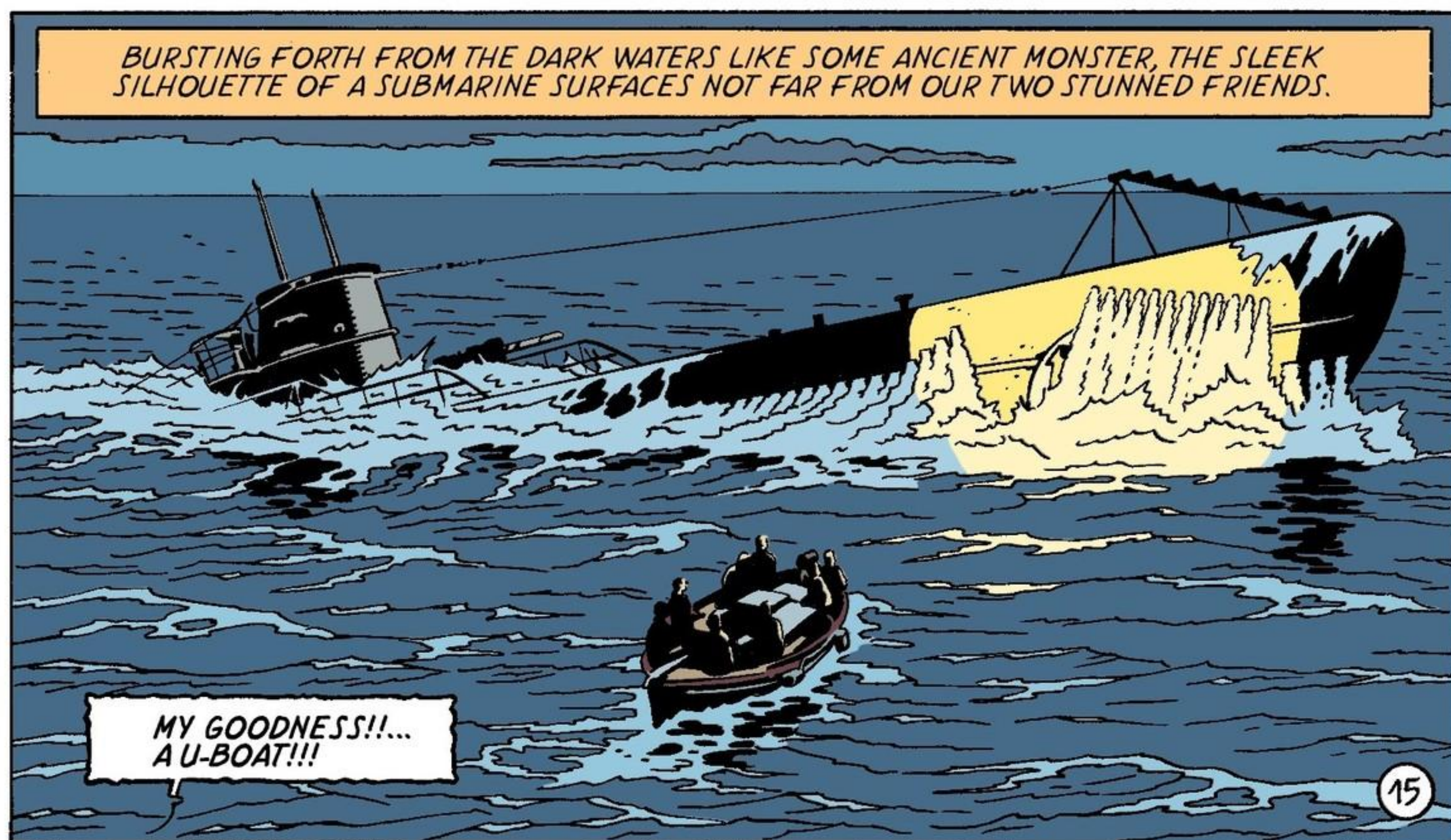
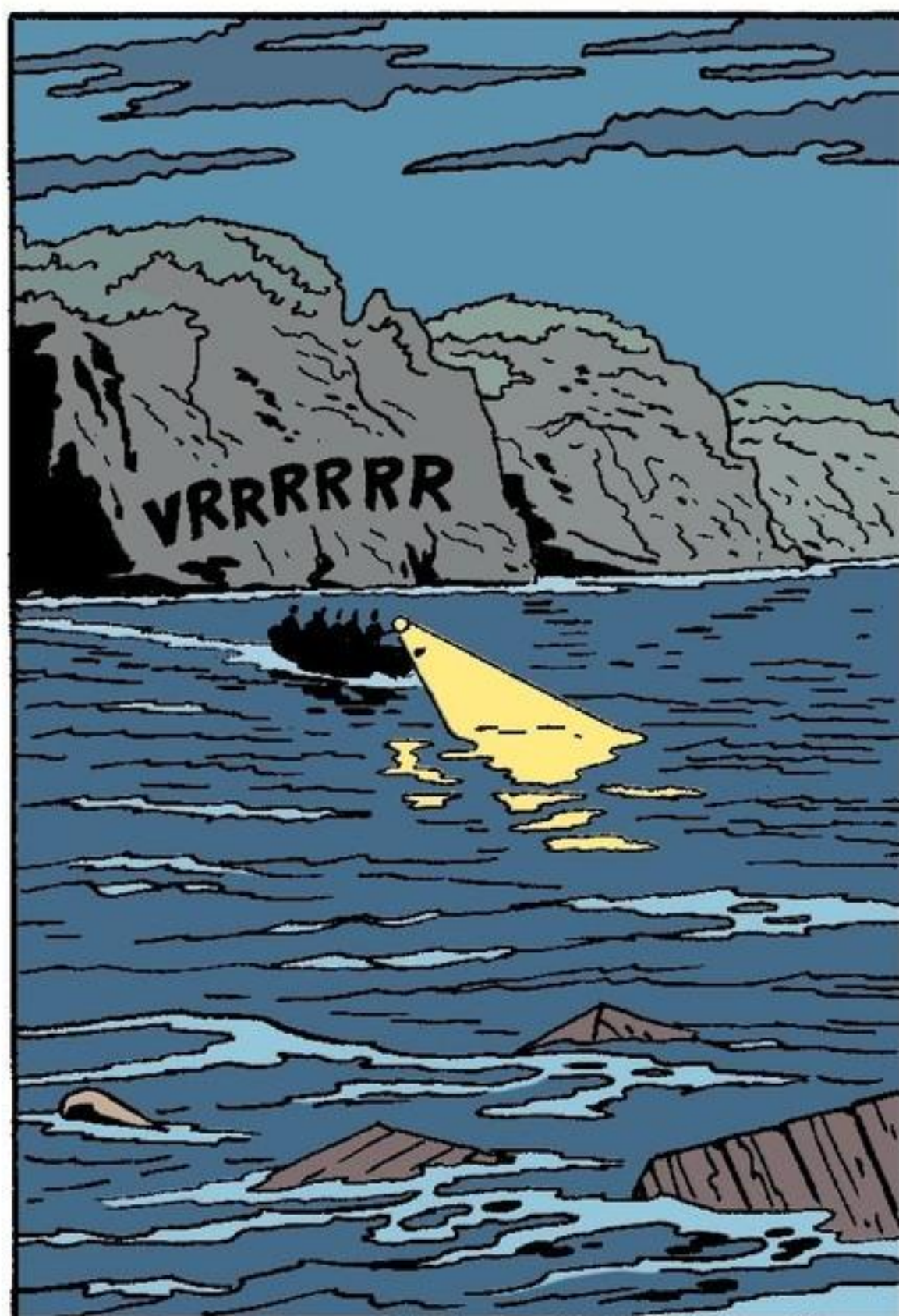


Those blasted busybodies seem to be equally lucky. But they're at our mercy out there. We could easily...

No.



It is vital to the success of my new plan that they stay alive. At least for a while. After that, they're all yours, Colonel!





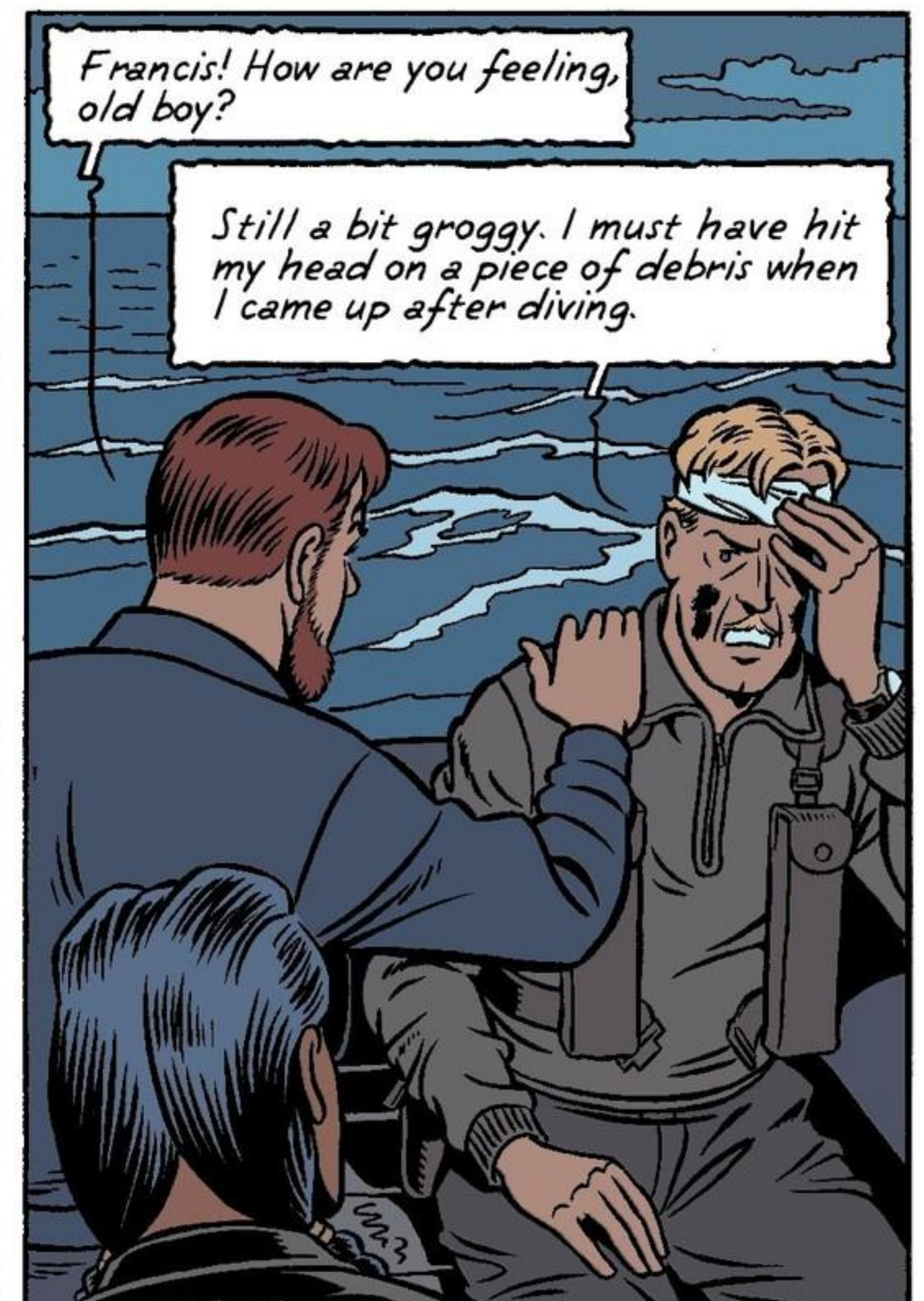
They're going aboard. One of them seems to be hurt.

You have excellent eyesight, Jessie. I can't make out anything.



You're forgetting I'm half Cheyenne, Professor. But how could this U-boat have come all the way here without being spotted?

The Nazis had several submarine bases in the Greek islands. Not all of them have been located yet.



Francis! How are you feeling, old boy?

Still a bit groggy. I must have hit my head on a piece of debris when I came up after diving.



Where's the seaplane?

Gone.

MORTIMER GIVES BLAKE A QUICK RECOUNTING OF THE EVENTS THAT HAVE JUST TAKEN PLACE.



Look! The submarine is diving.

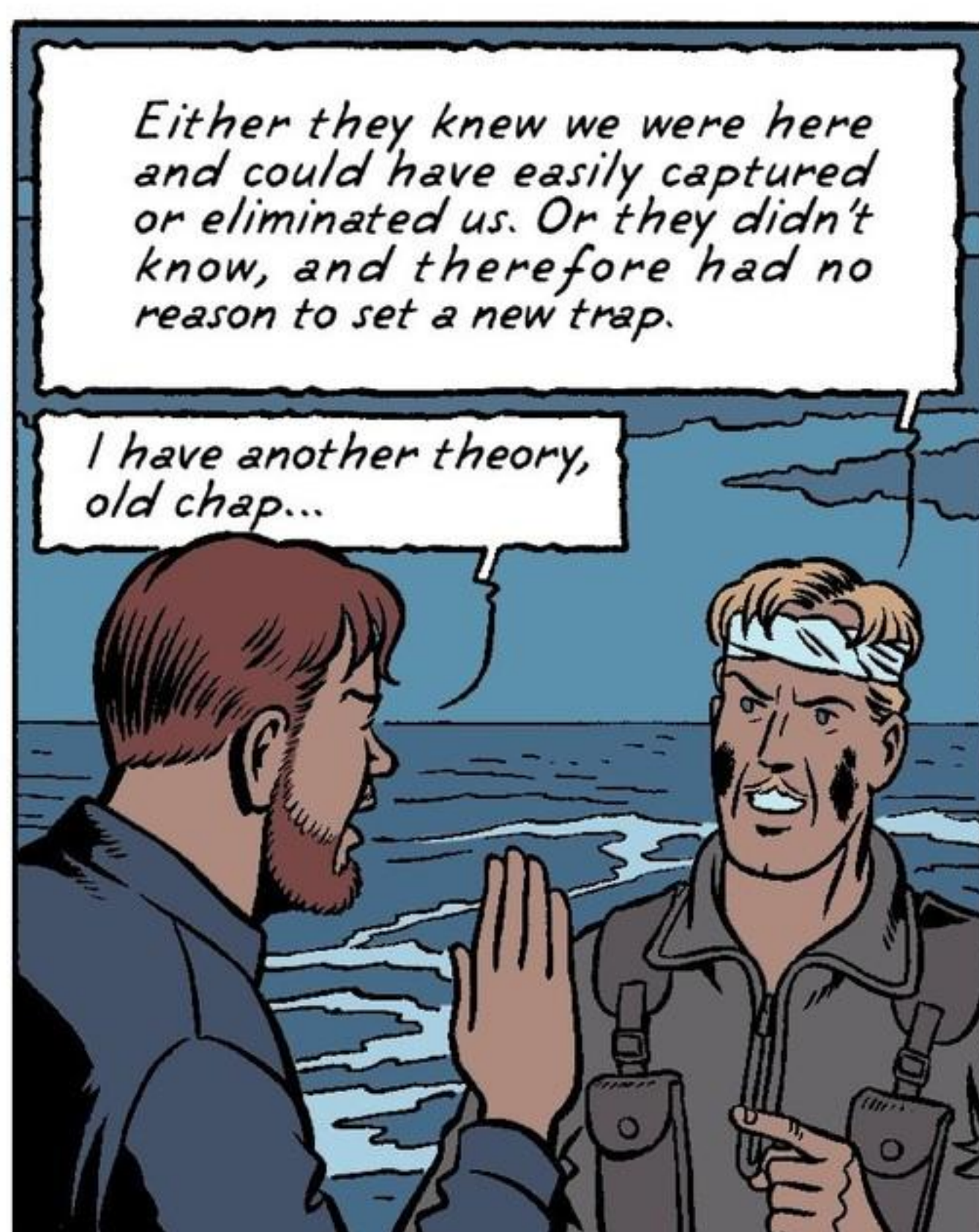
It looks like they abandoned their motorboat without scuttling it.



We could recover it. I must admit that the prospect of rowing for hours to reach the village doesn't appeal to me.

What if it's another trap? They could very well have rigged it to explode.

I don't think so.



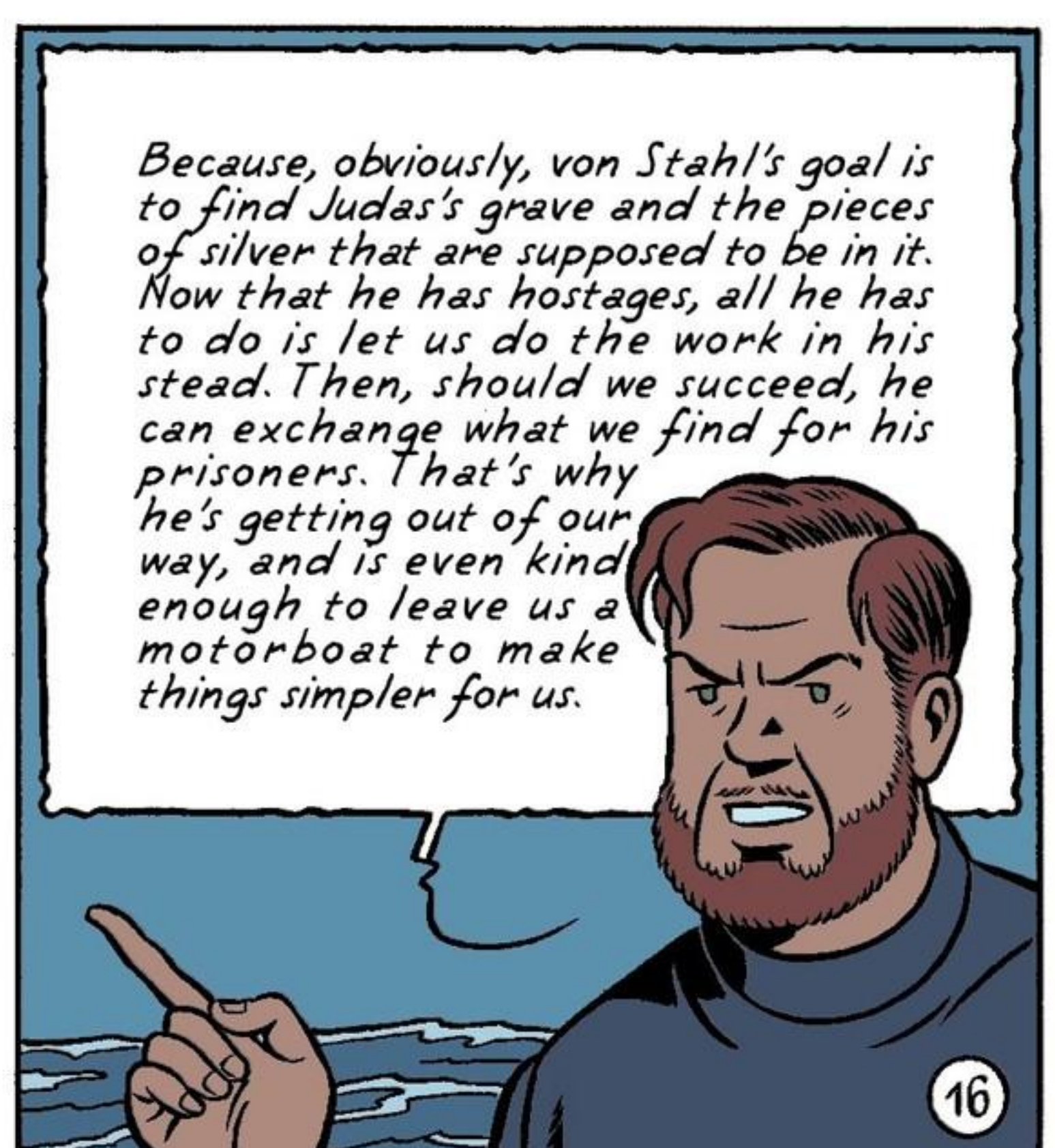
Either they knew we were here and could have easily captured or eliminated us. Or they didn't know, and therefore had no reason to set a new trap.

I have another theory, old chap...

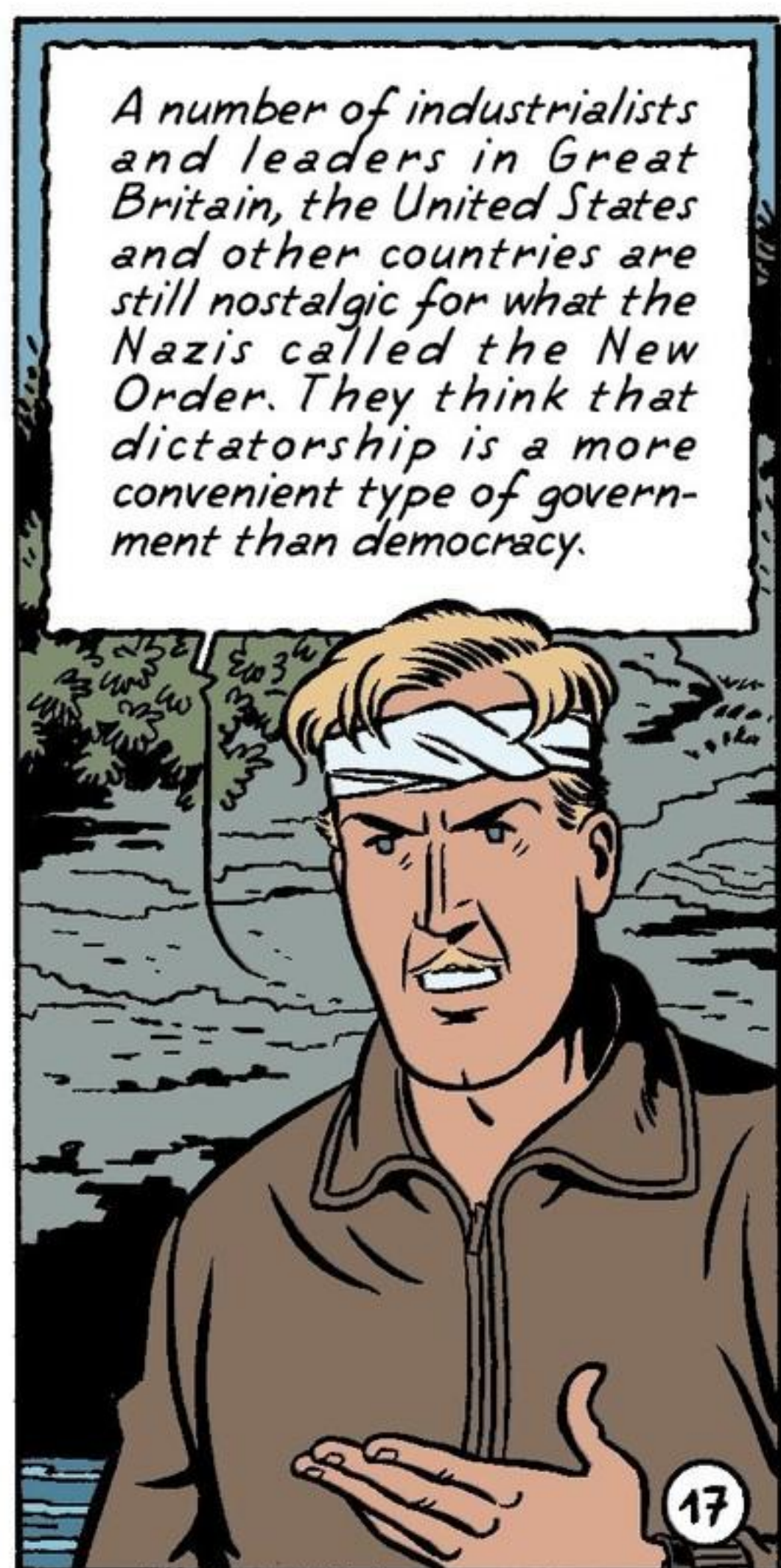
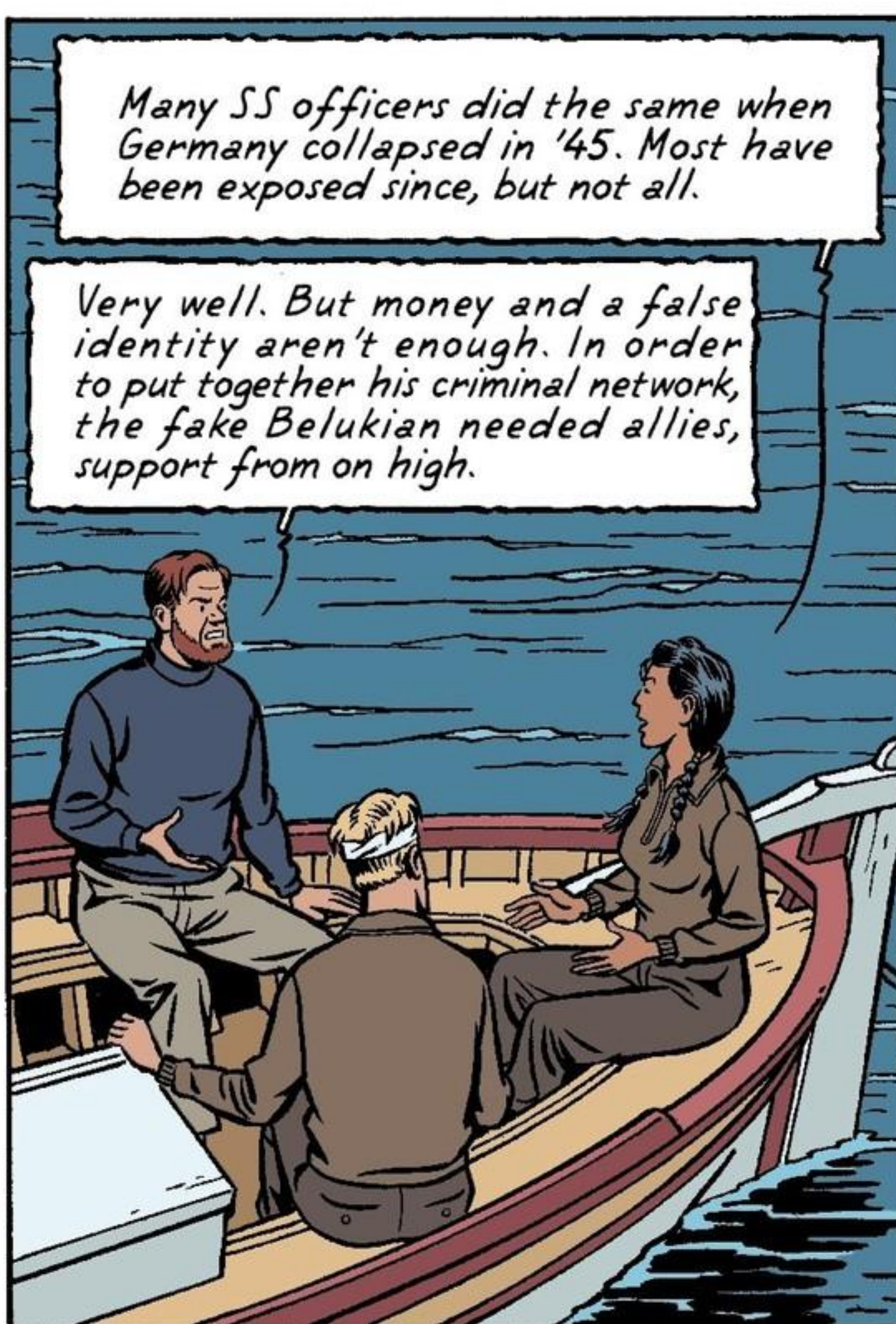
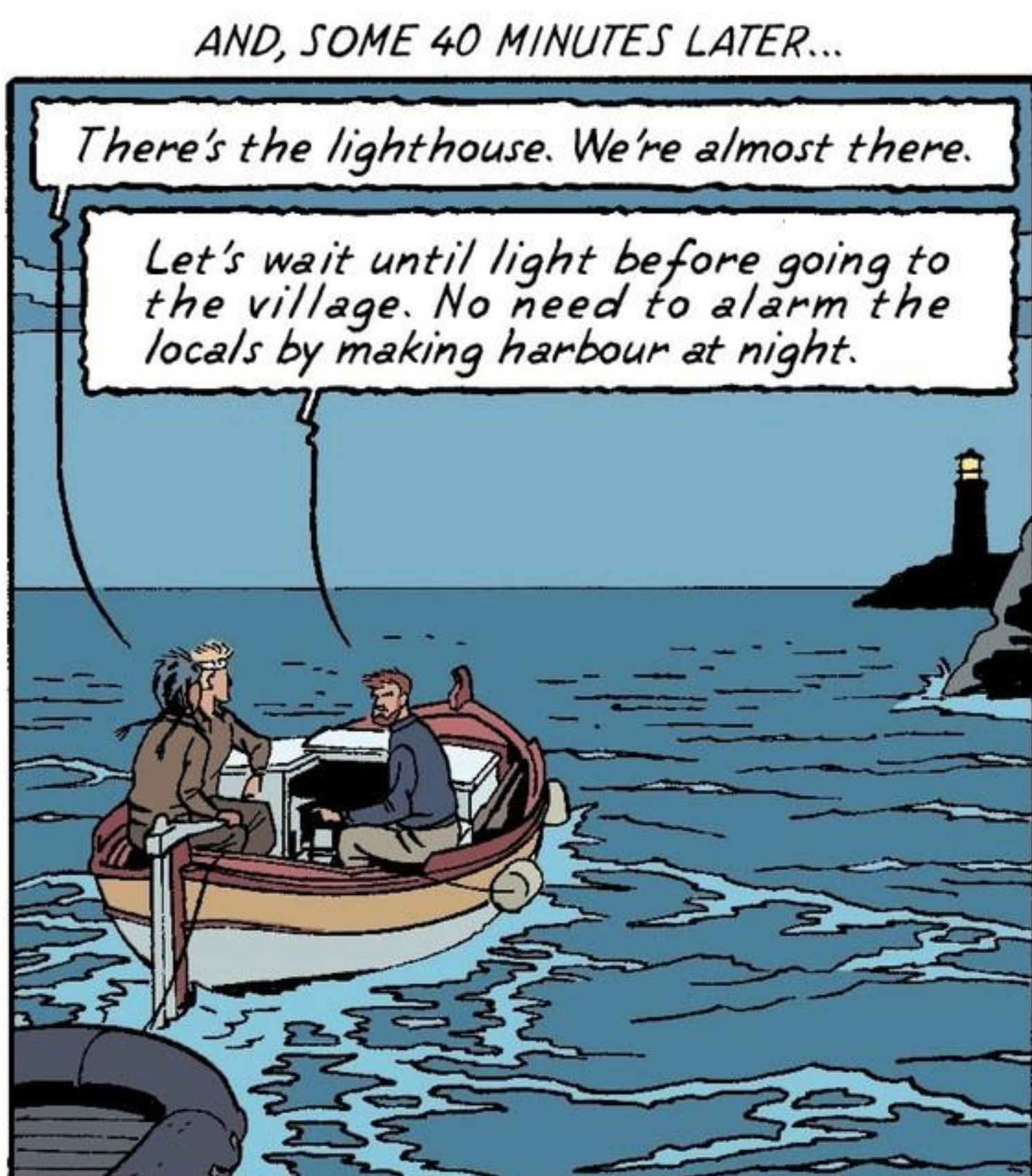
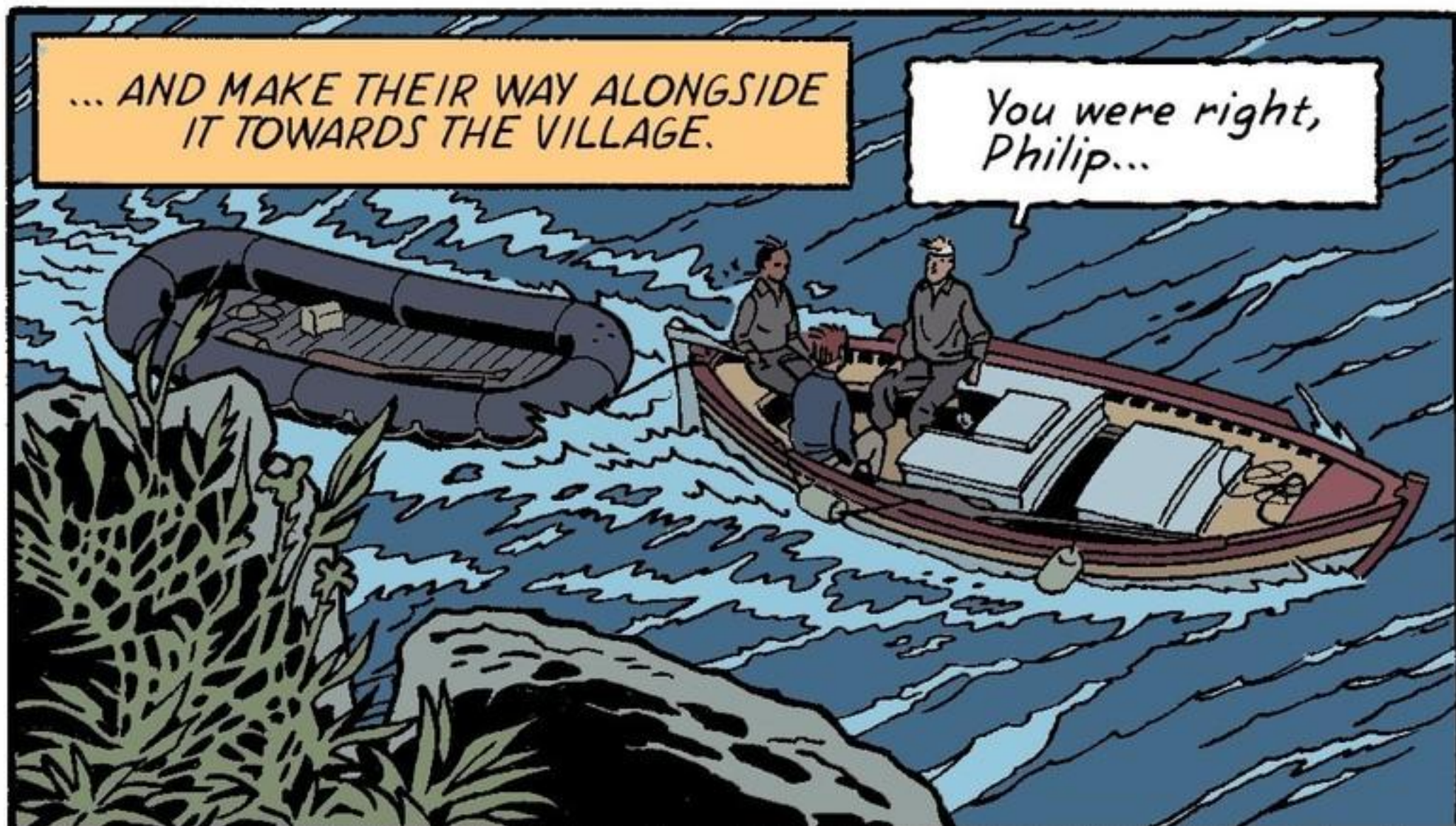


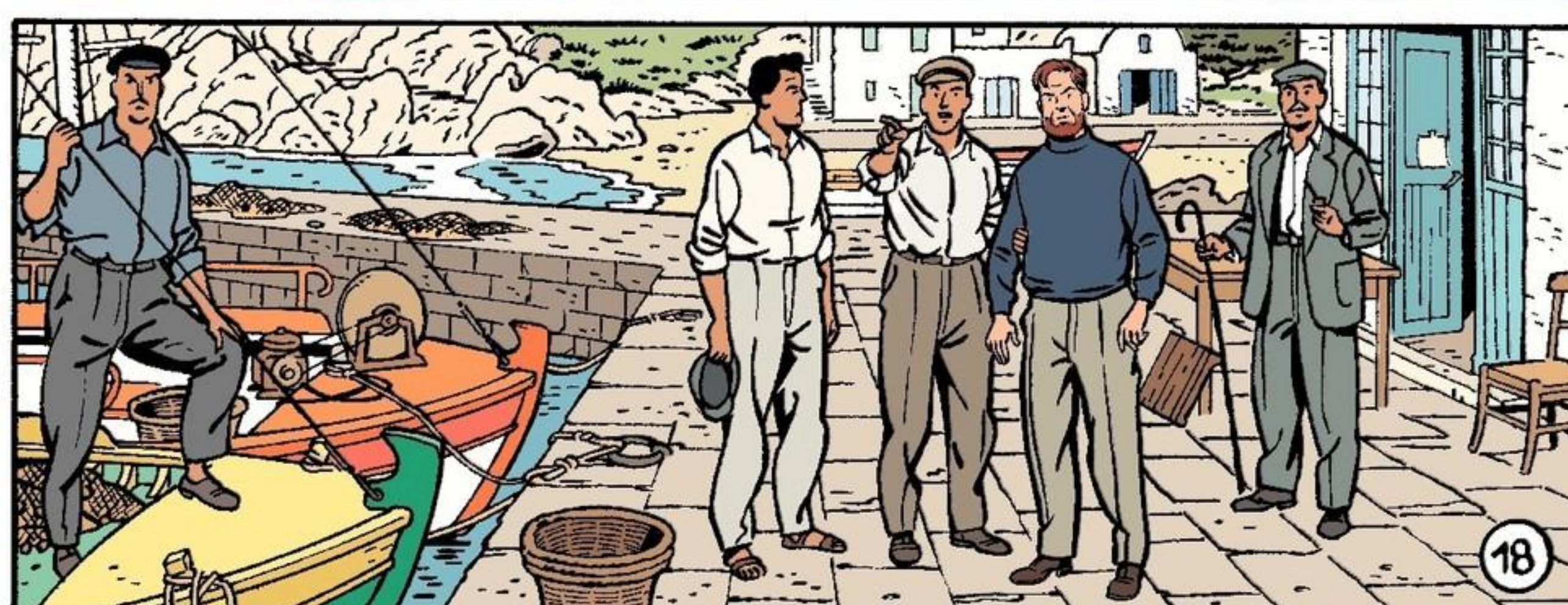
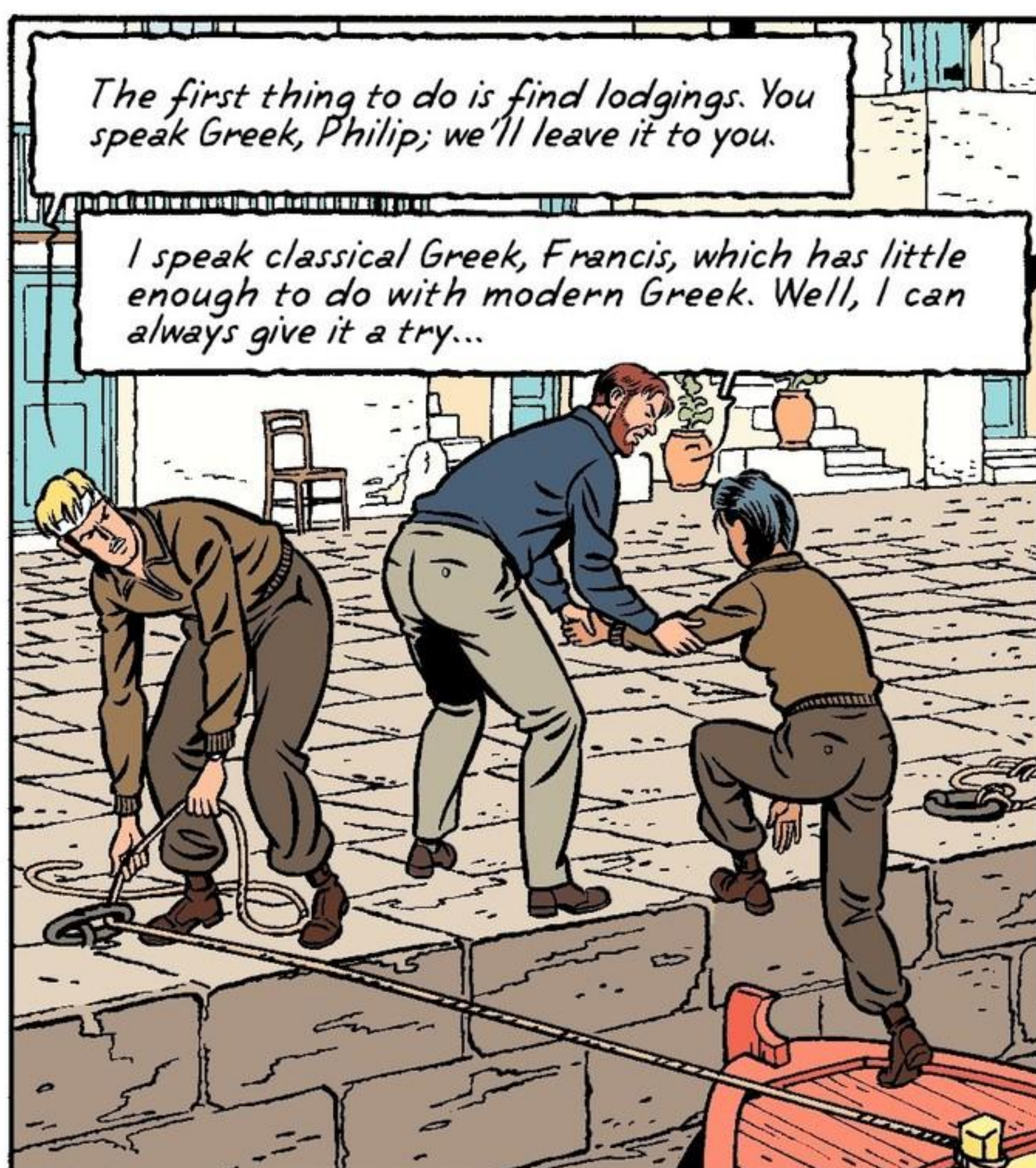
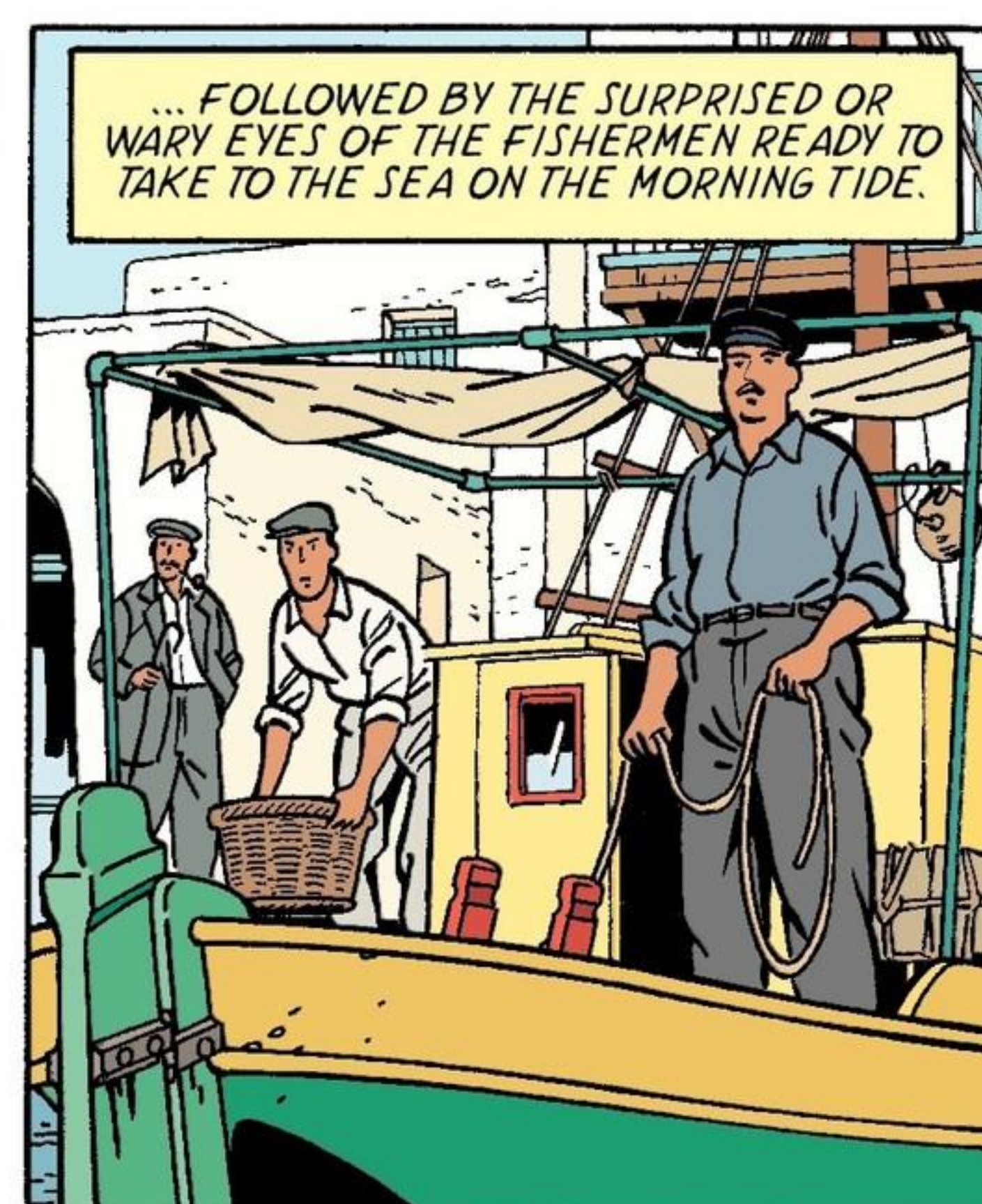
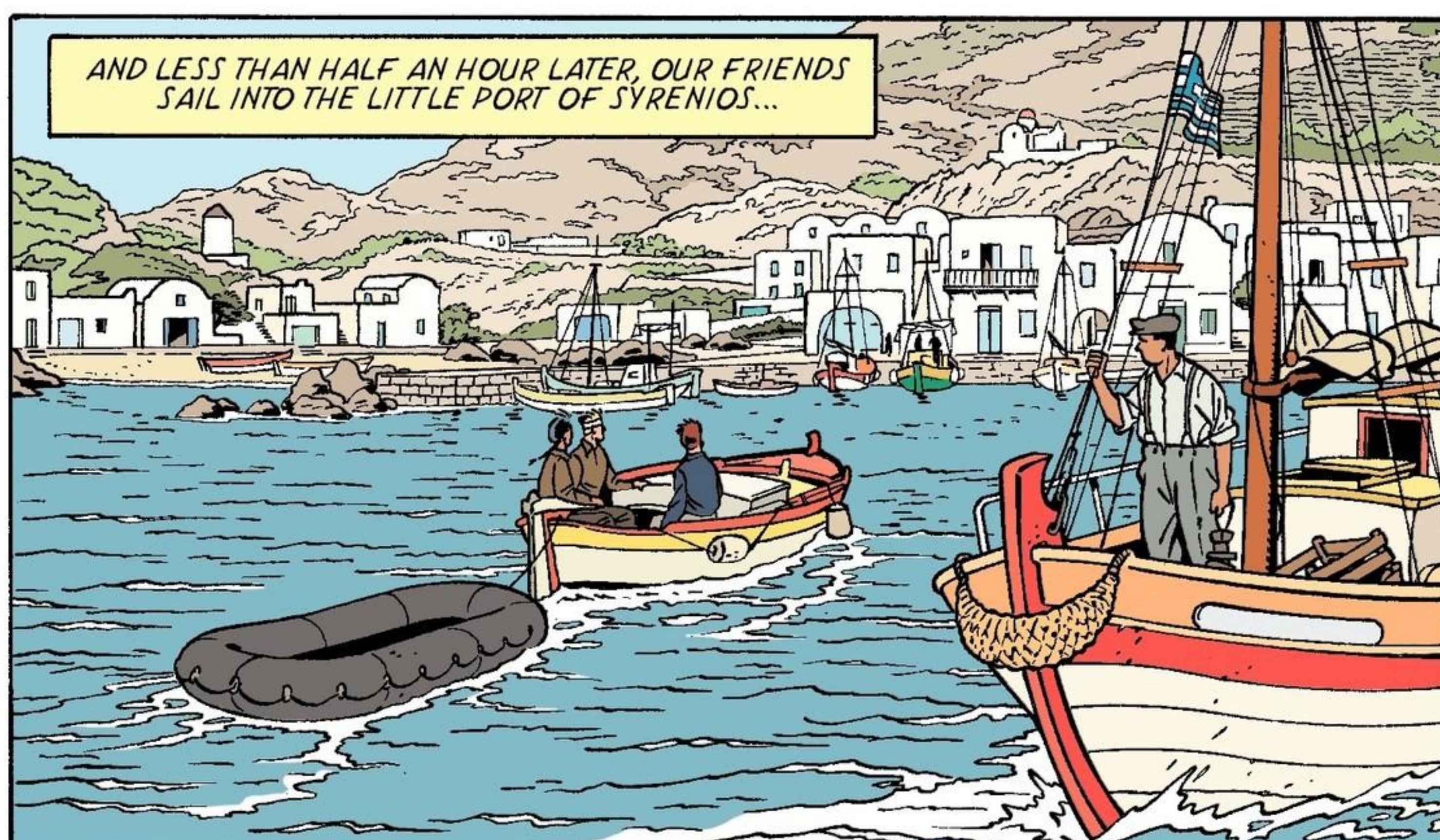
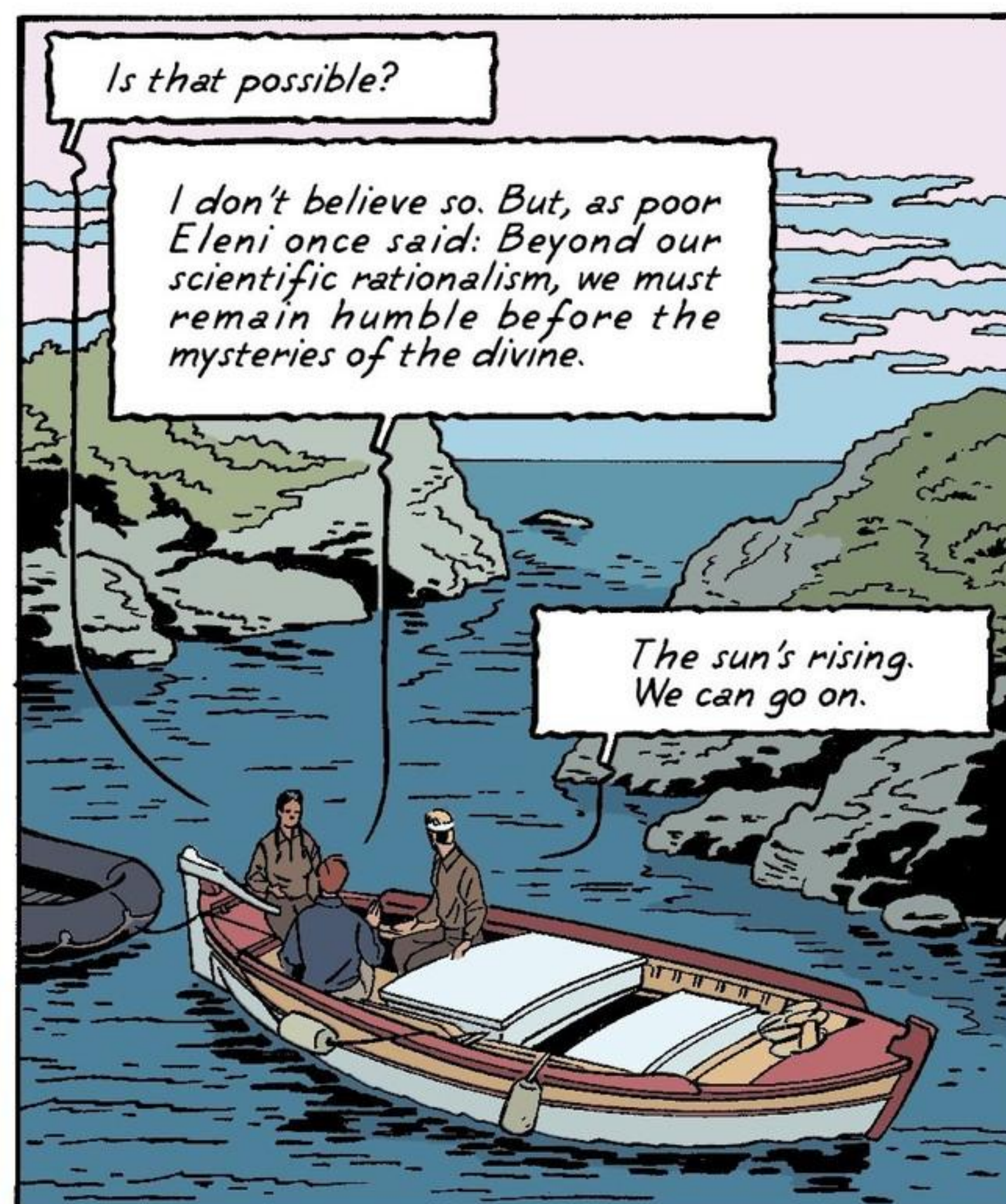
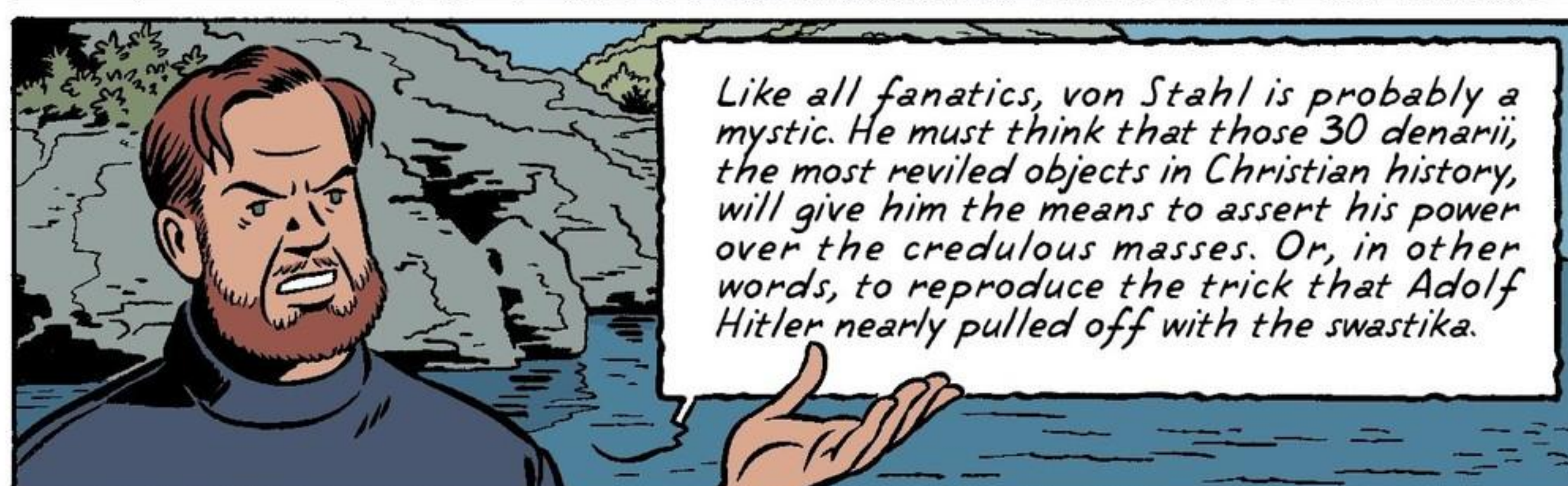
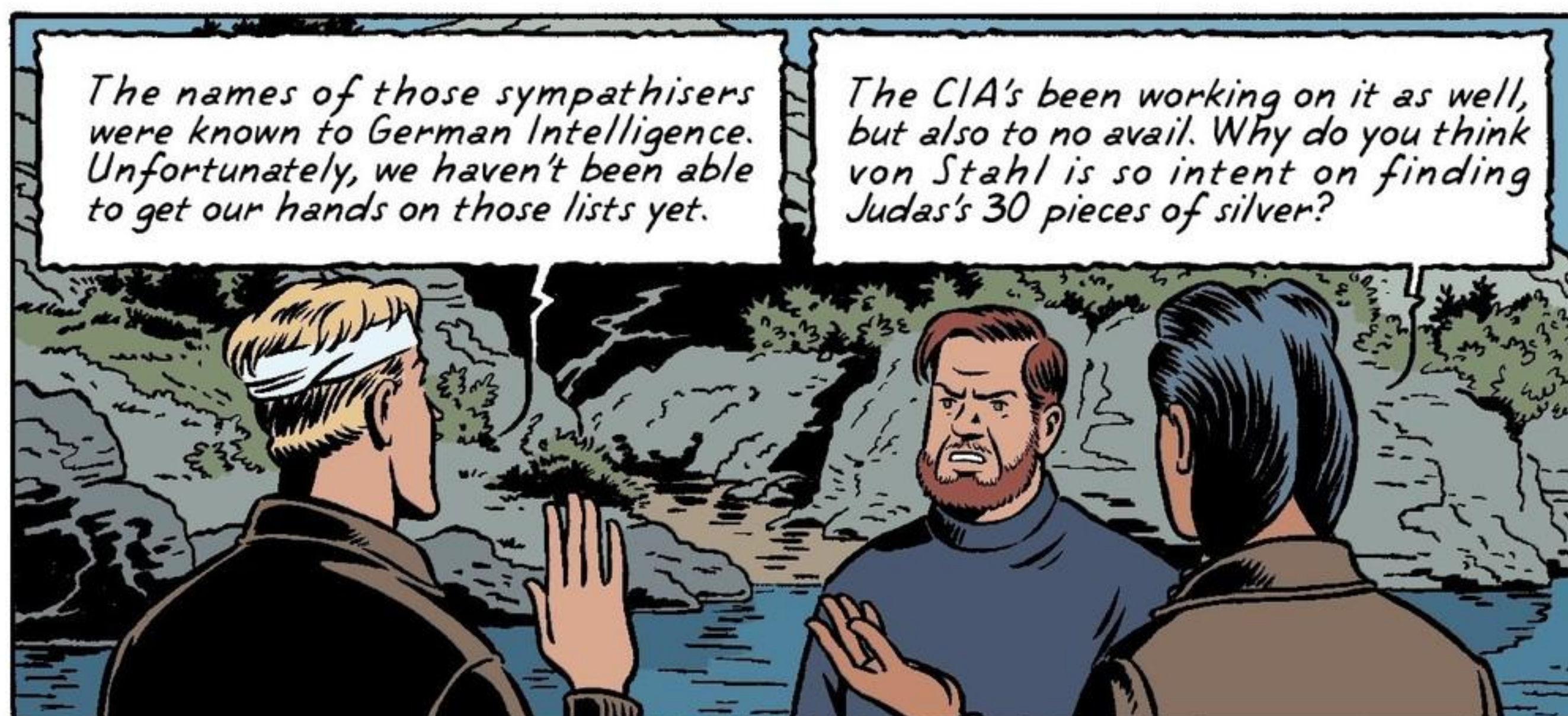
From the island, von Stahl and Olrik can't have failed to see Jessie and me looking for you with the searchlight. And yet, they did nothing to eliminate us, as you said.

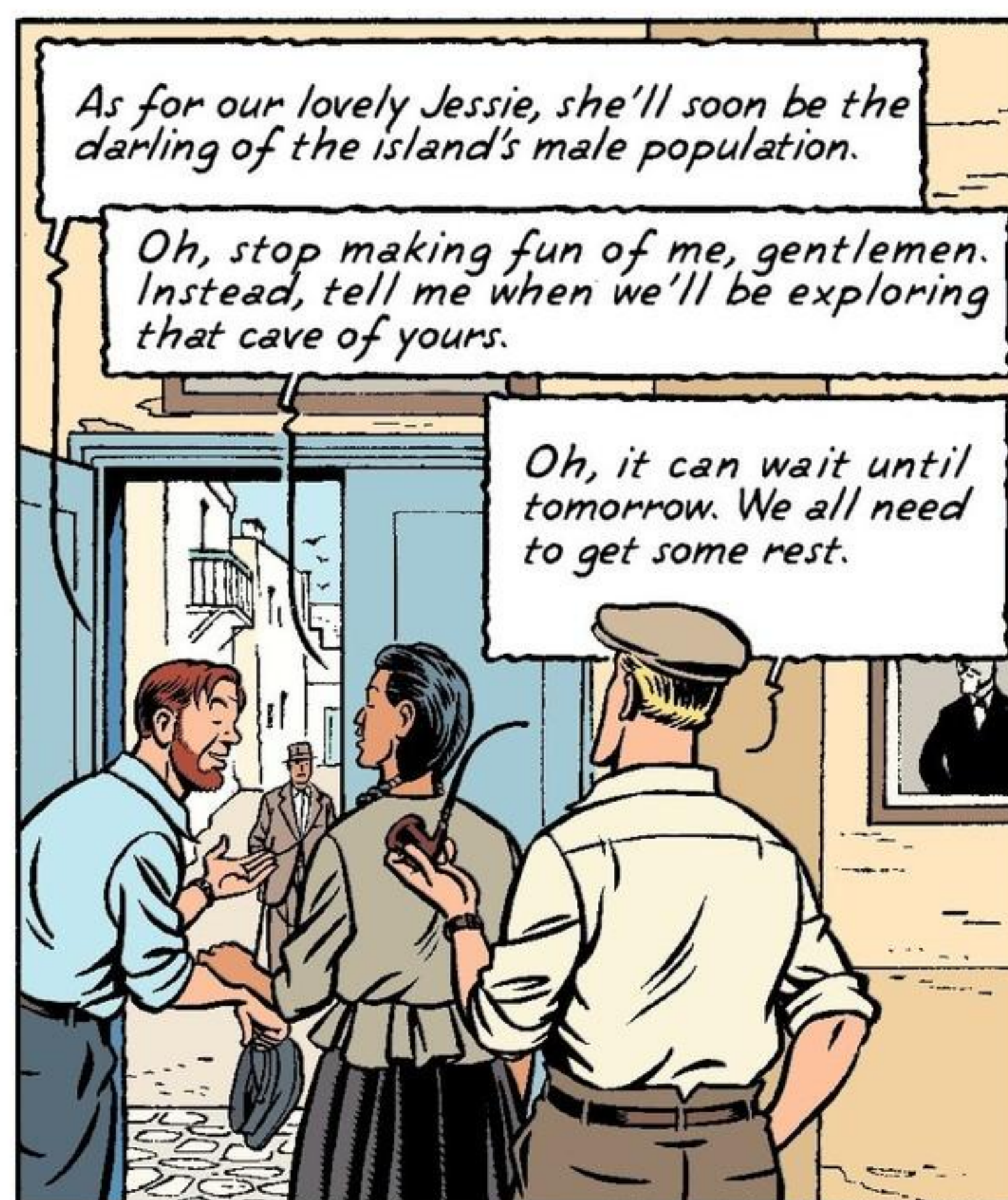
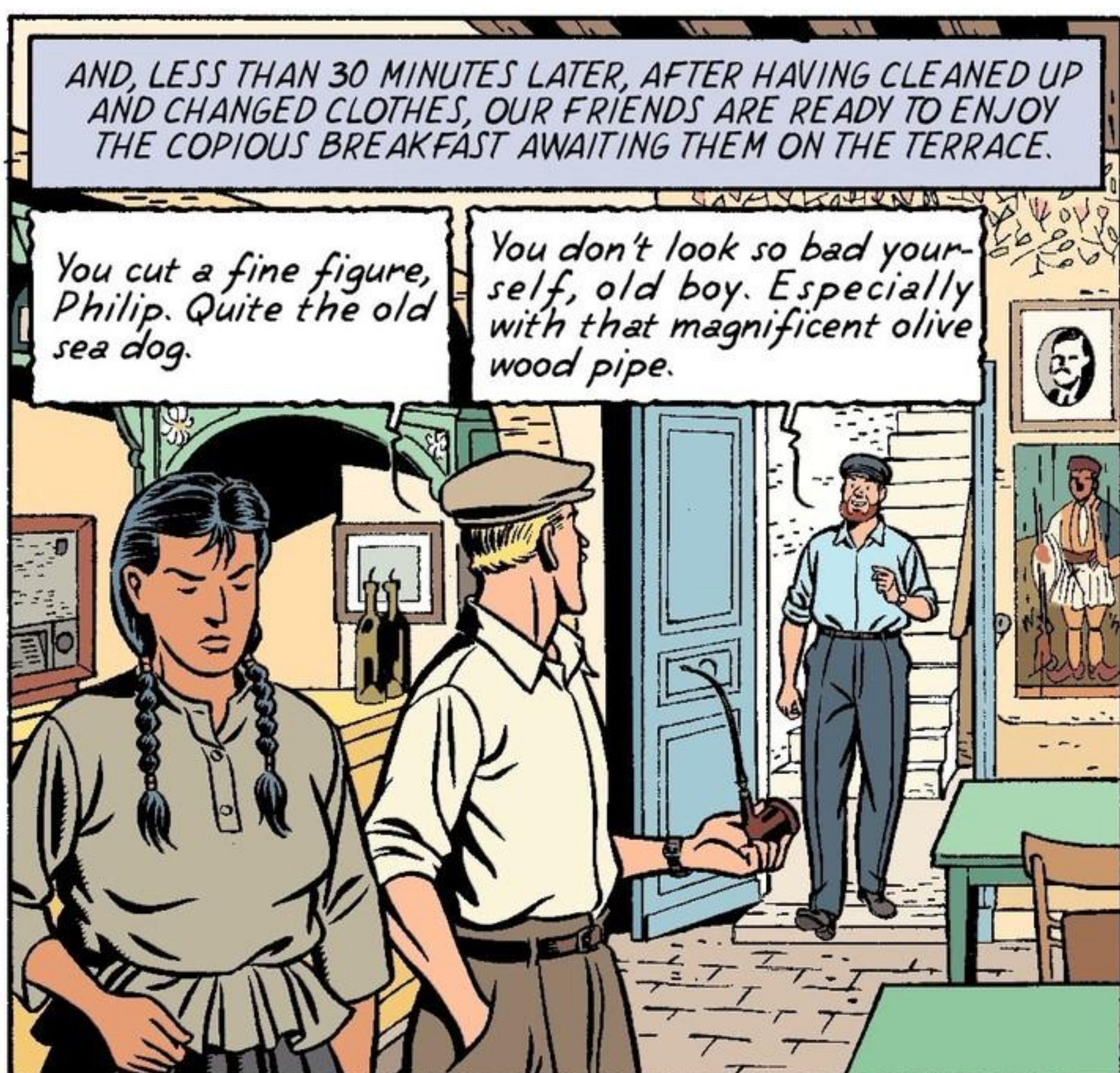
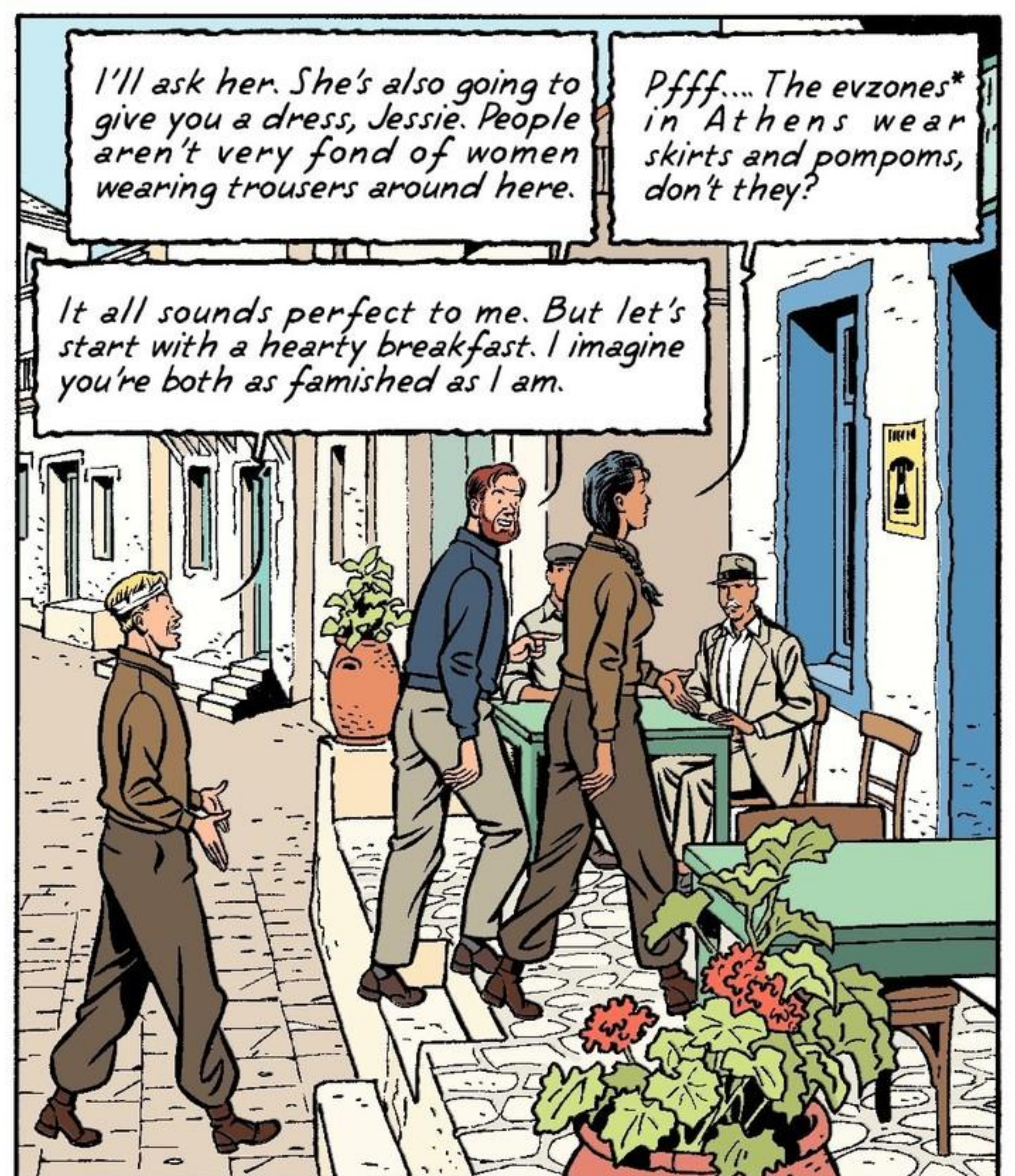
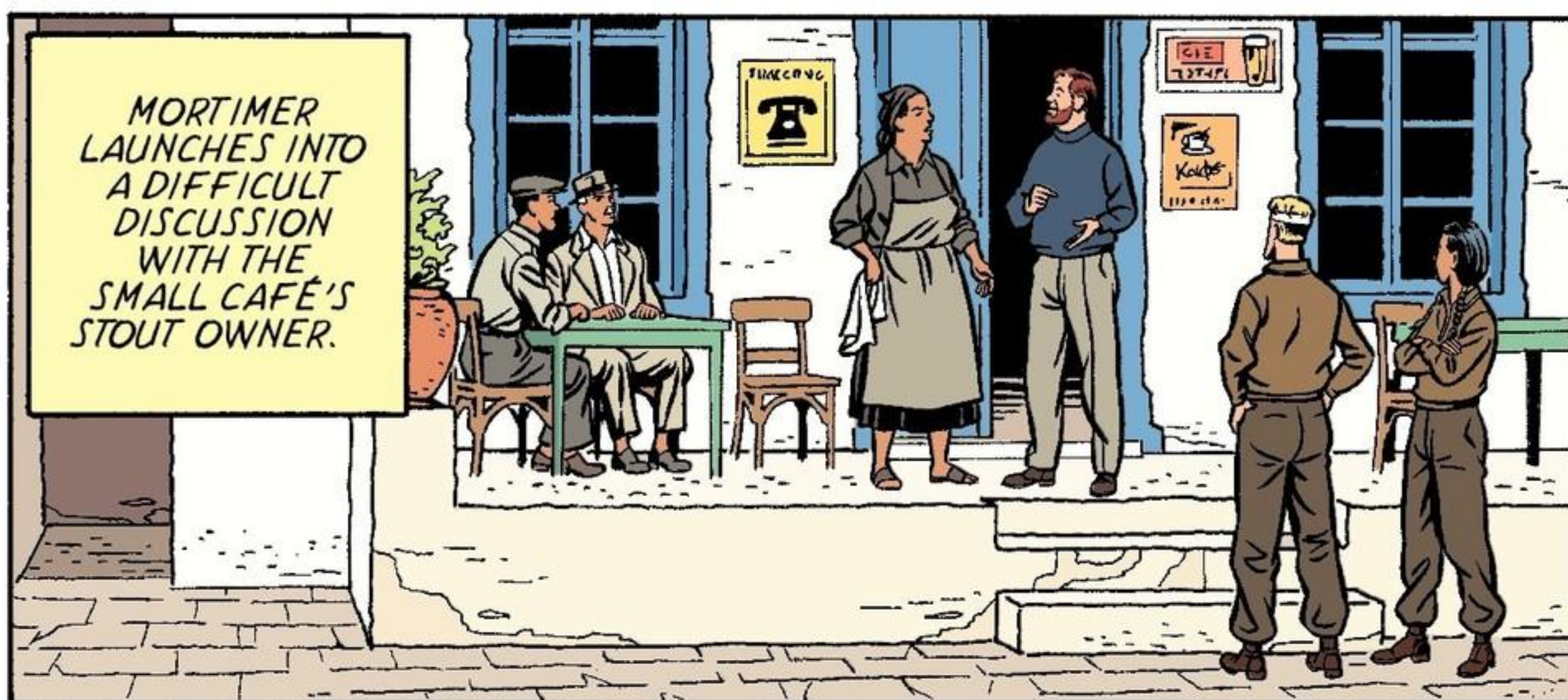
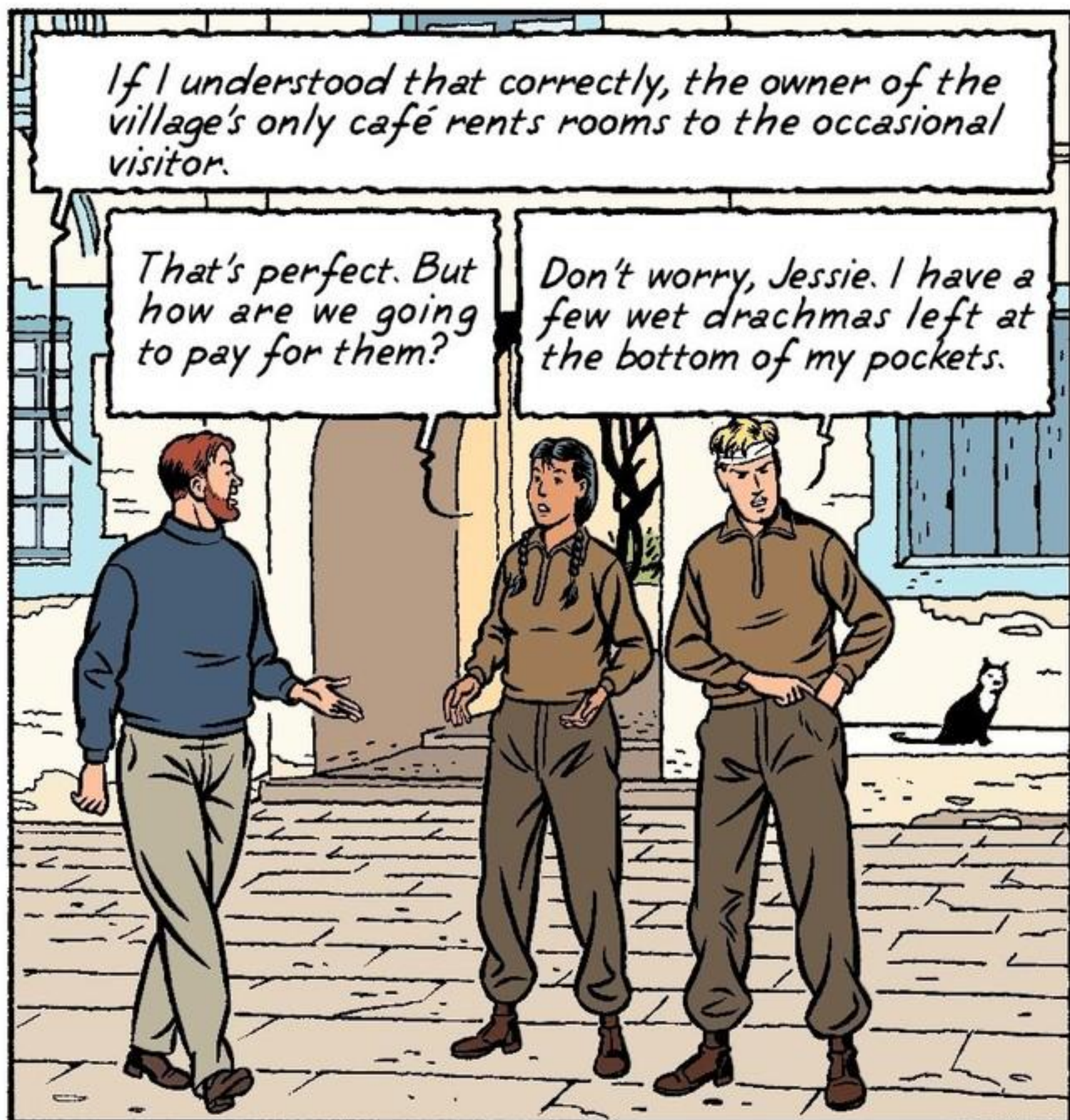
Any idea why?



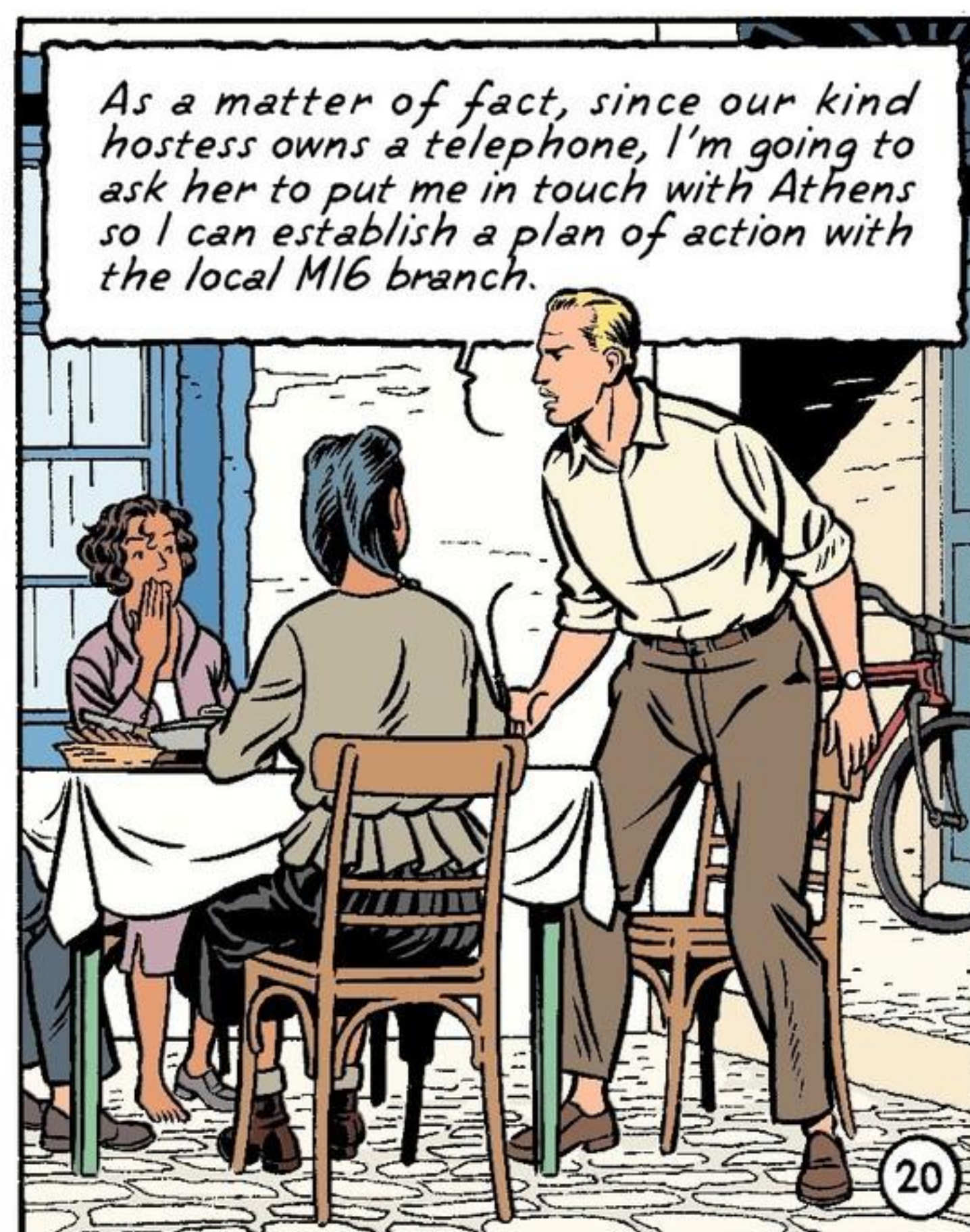
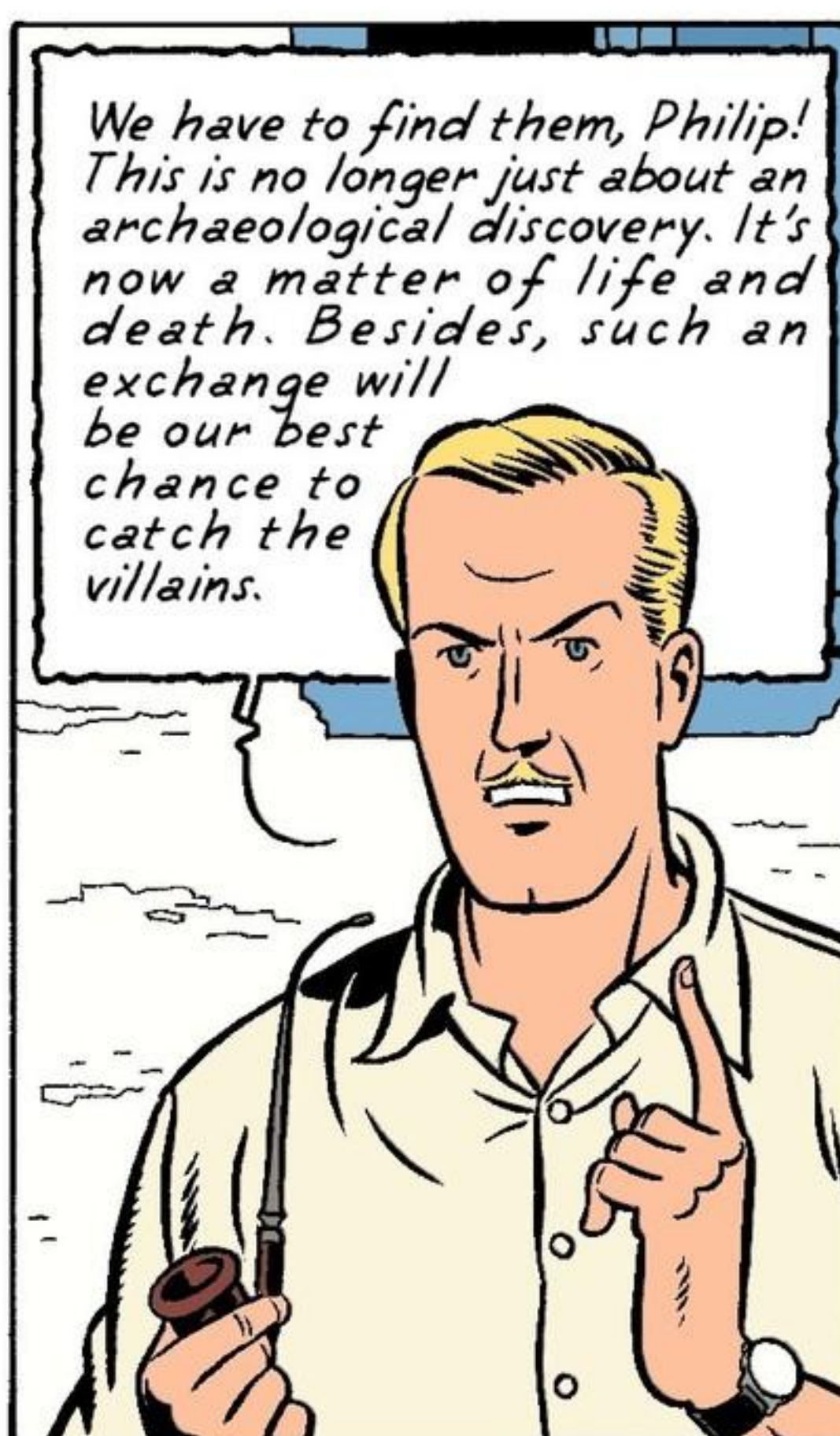
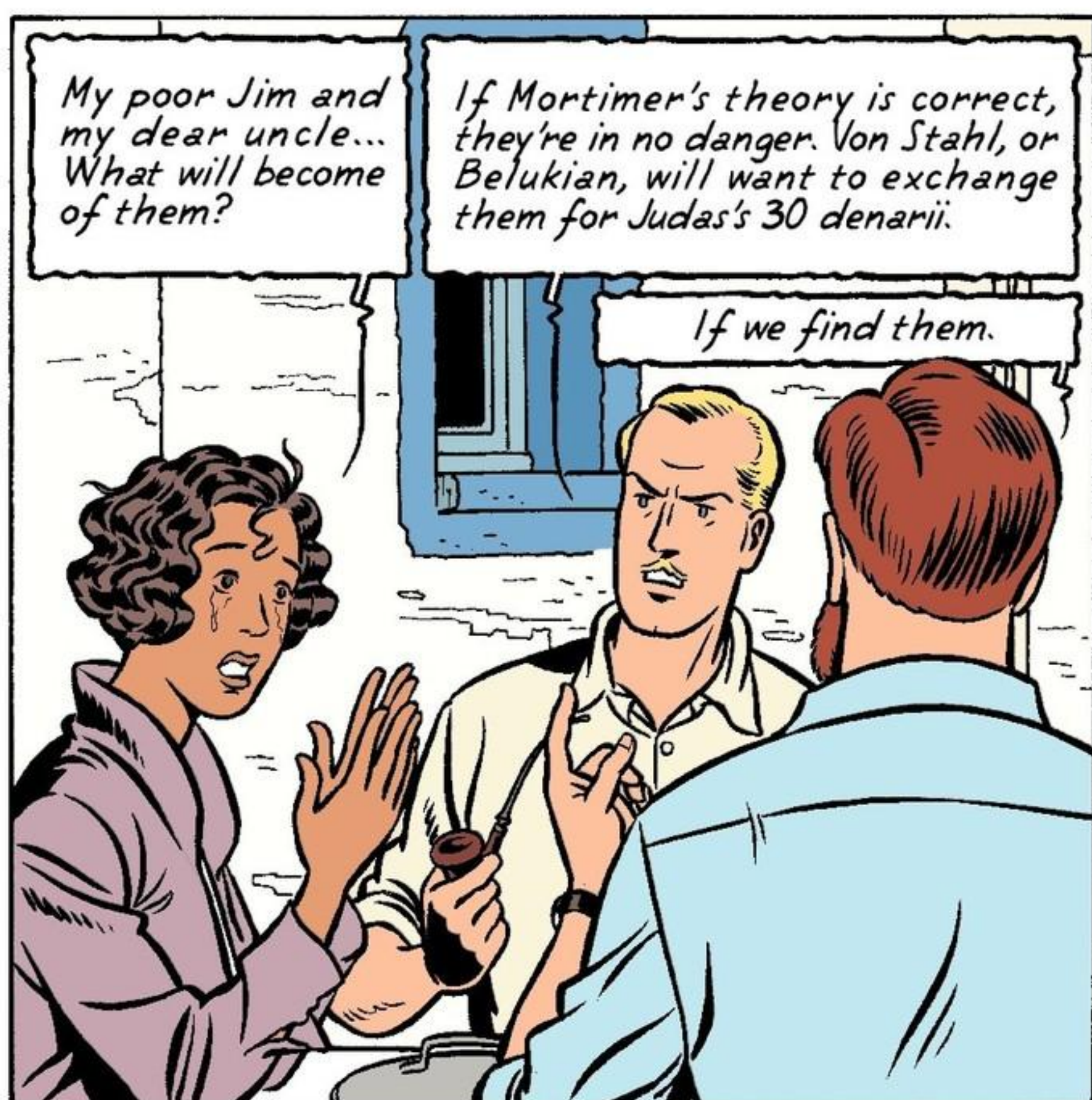
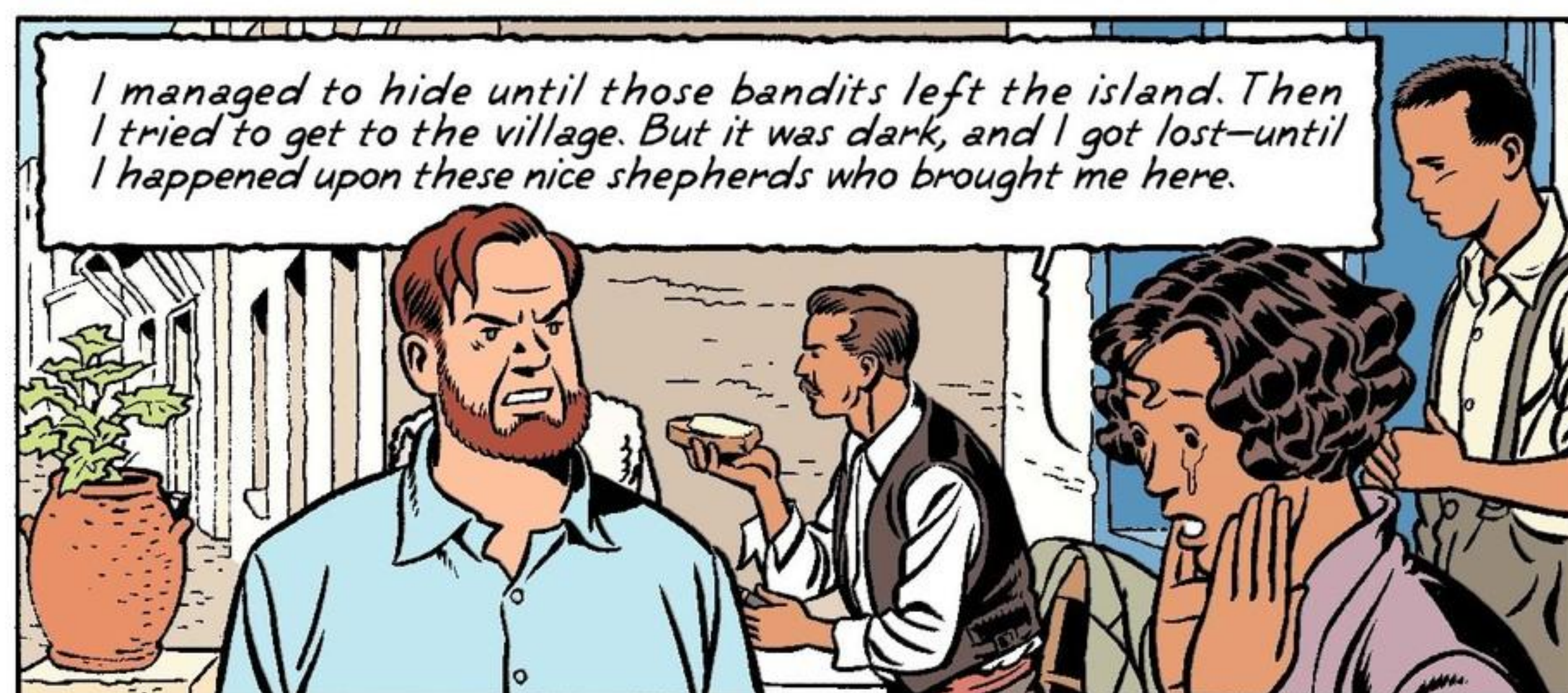
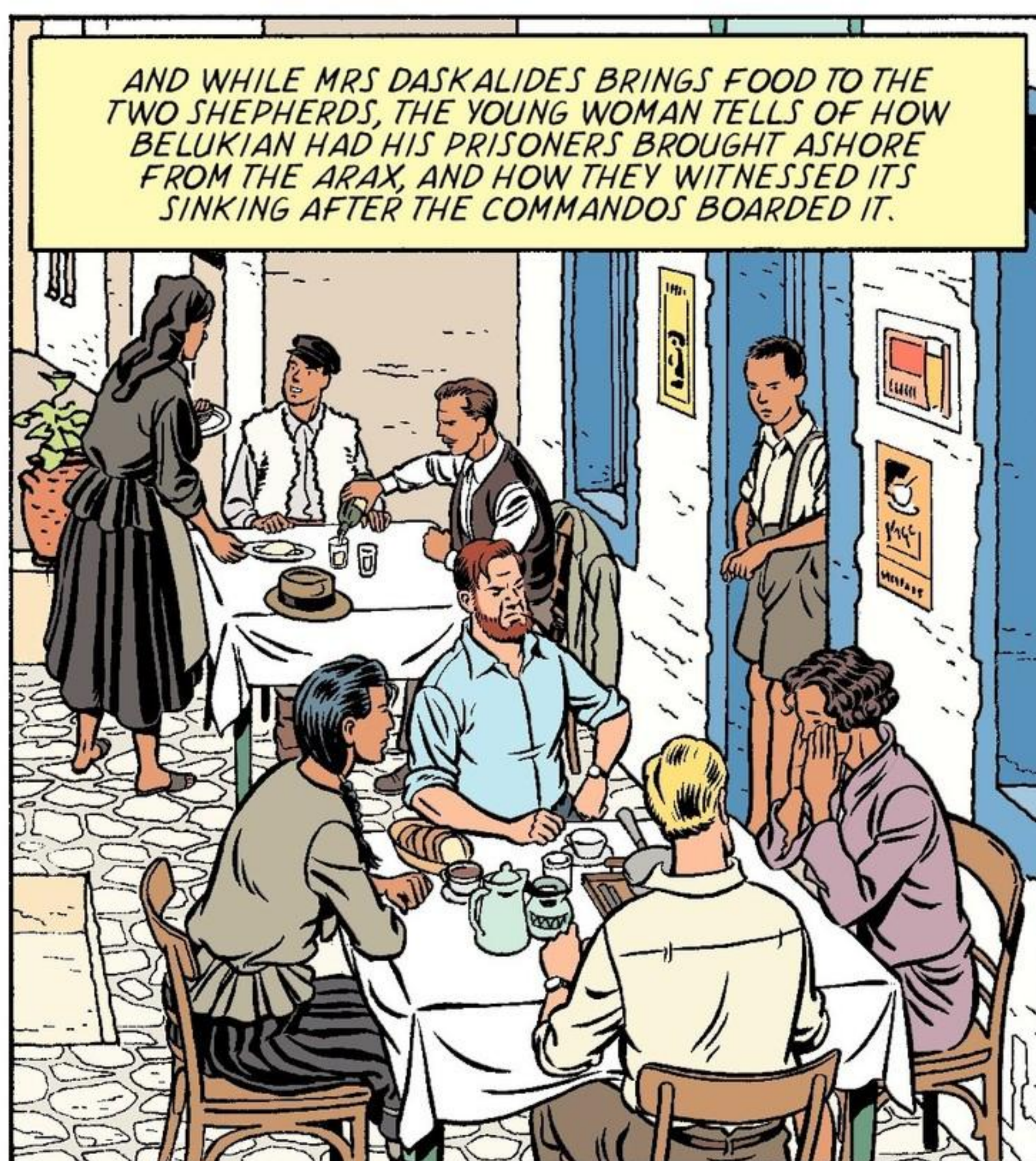
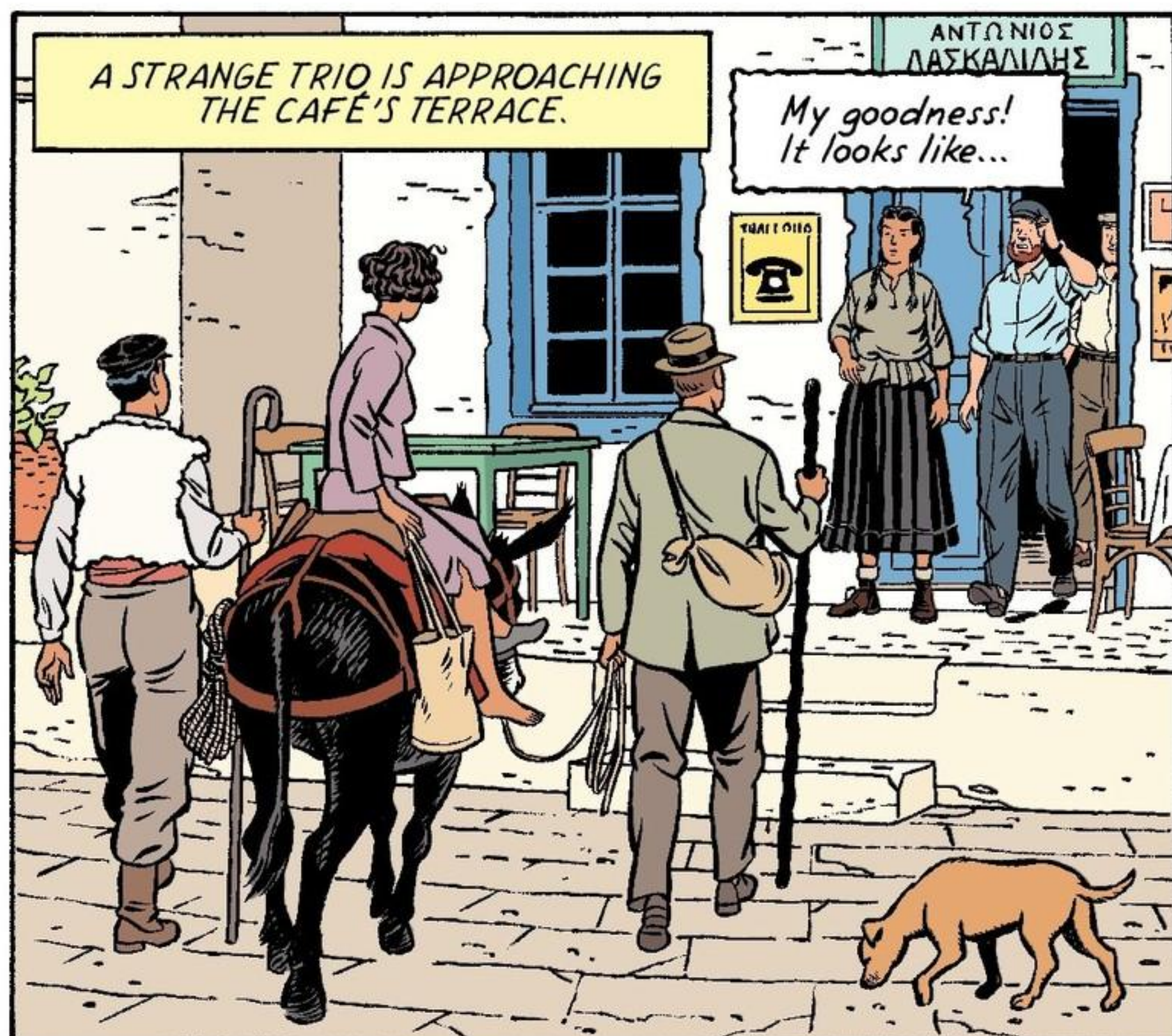
Because, obviously, von Stahl's goal is to find Judas's grave and the pieces of silver that are supposed to be in it. Now that he has hostages, all he has to do is let us do the work in his stead. Then, should we succeed, he can exchange what we find for his prisoners. That's why he's getting out of our way, and is even kind enough to leave us a motorboat to make things simpler for us.







*GREEK PRESIDENTIAL GUARD UNIT, KNOWN FOR THEIR DISTINCTIVE TRADITIONAL UNIFORM





THAT SAME EVENING, WHILE OUR FRIENDS ARE ENJOYING A WELL DESERVED NIGHT'S SLEEP...

Just a little more patience, my dear companions. Soon we will reach our goal.



Let's hope so. Even though the usefulness of that goal you're pursuing is still unclear to us.

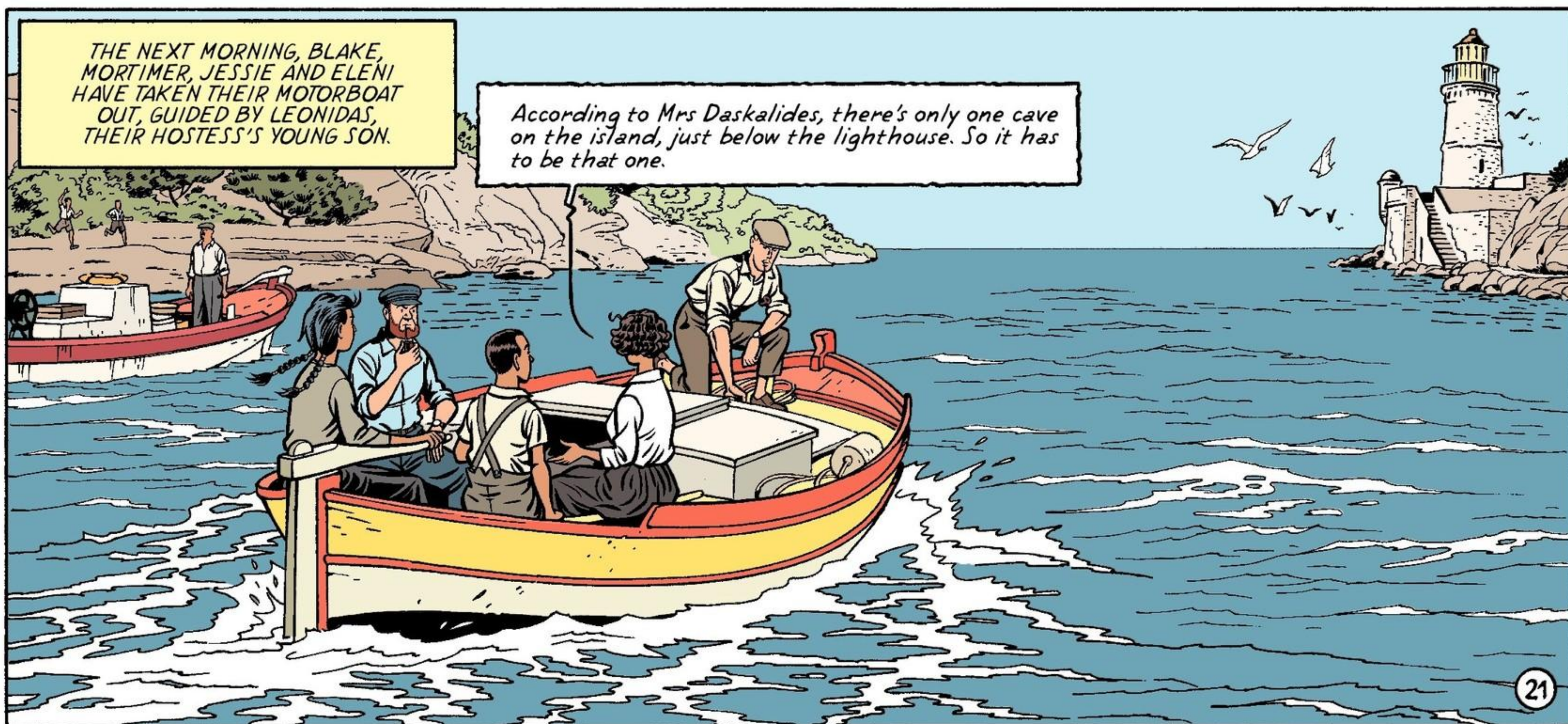
In the meantime, it is regrettable that the FBI and the Intelligence Service identified you, von Stahl. You are the only one who knows our identities. If they arrest you, we're done for.



That's one of the reasons I sacrificed my yacht. It was too easy to track. I have now become invisible. By the time I can show myself openly once again, it will be too late for our enemies. We shall triumph, my friends! And all those who will not accept our victory will perish like dogs.

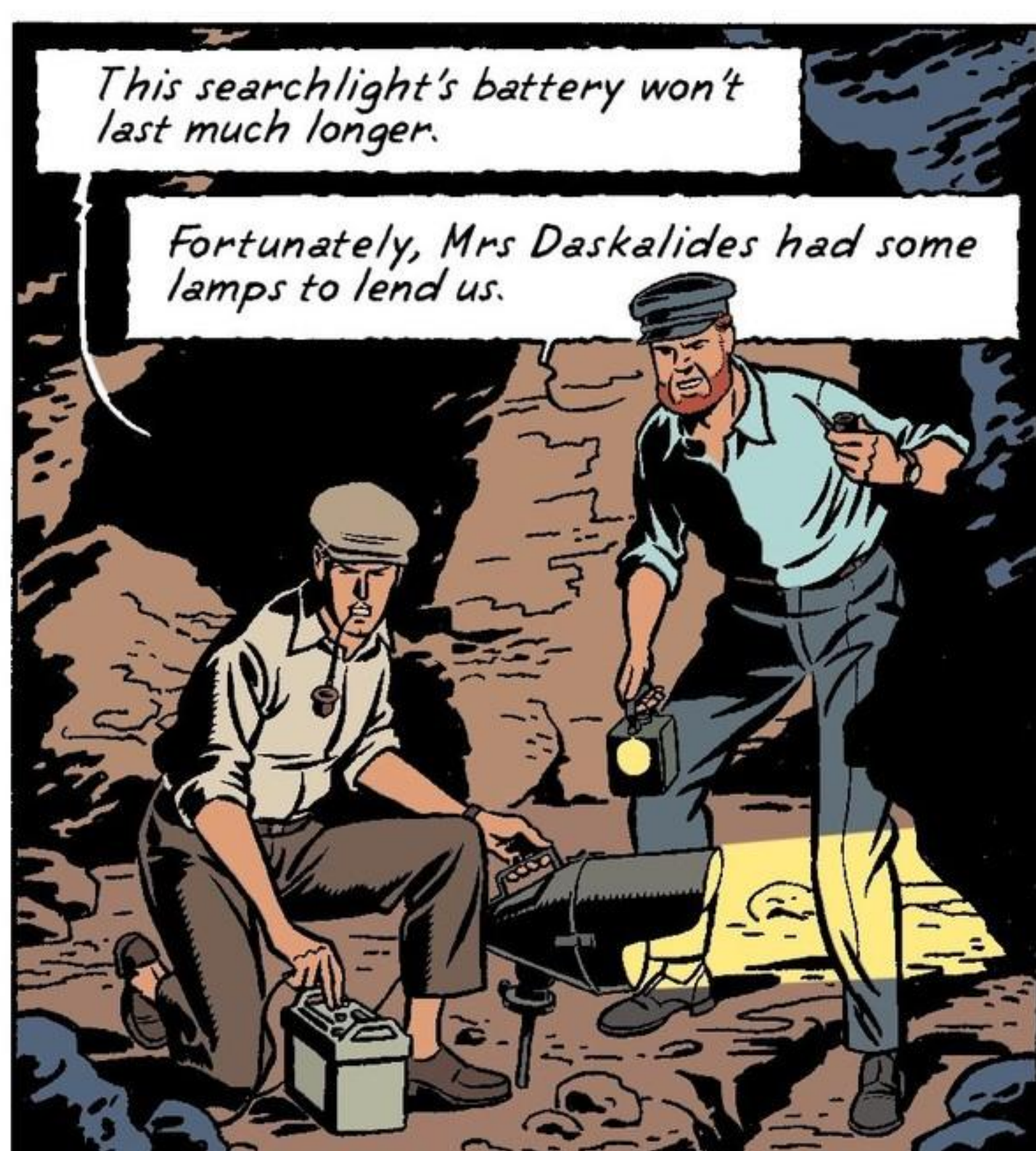
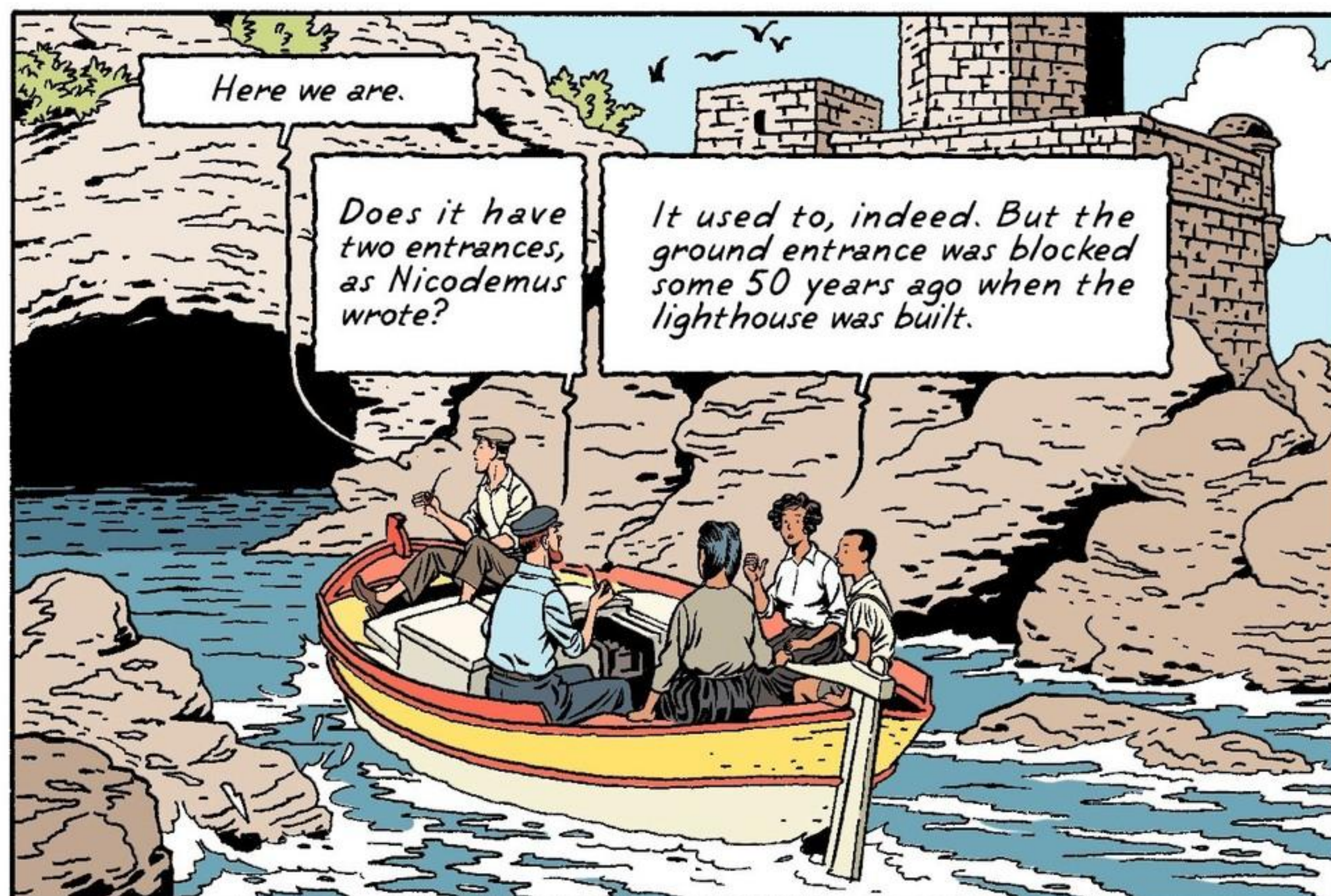


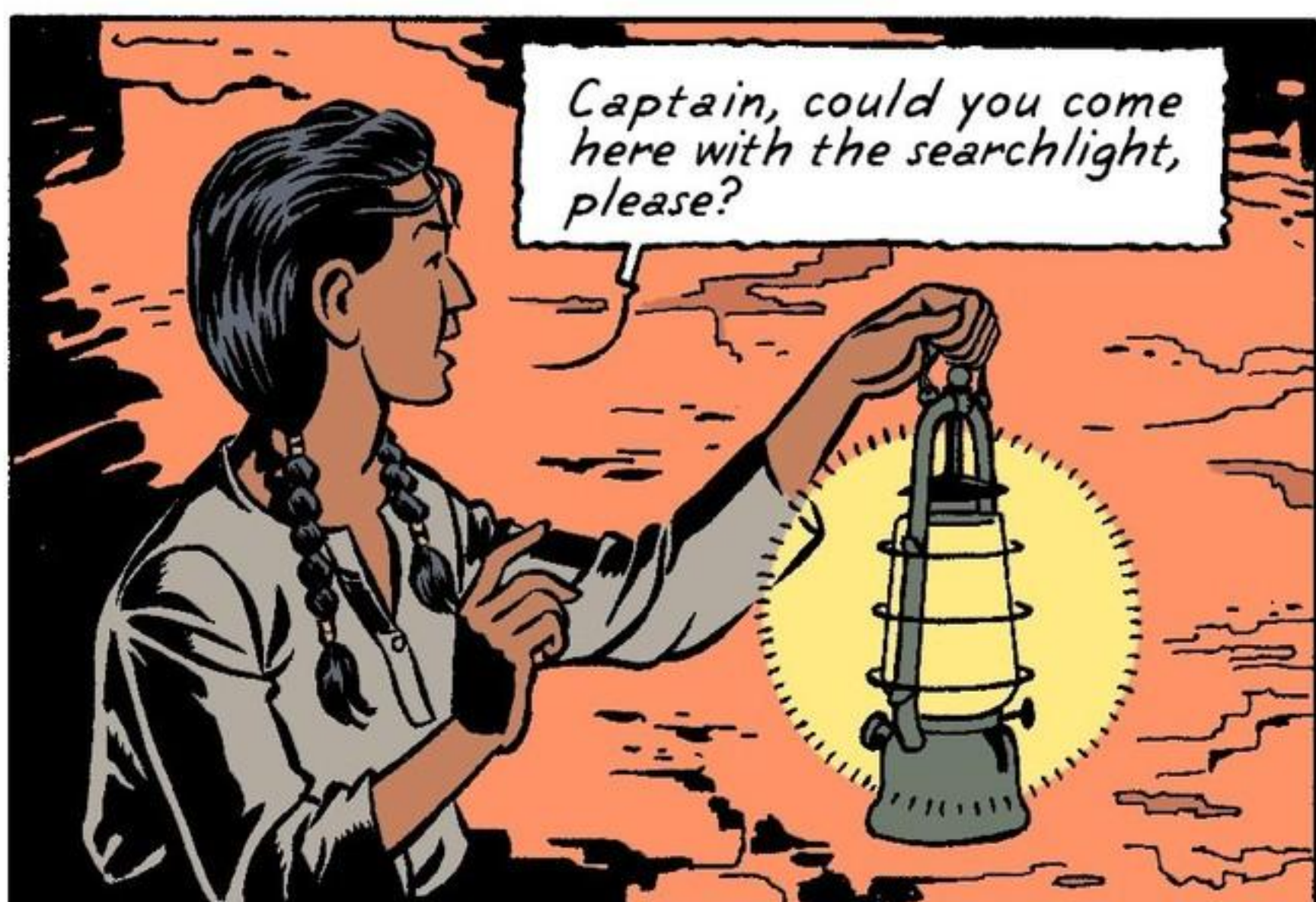
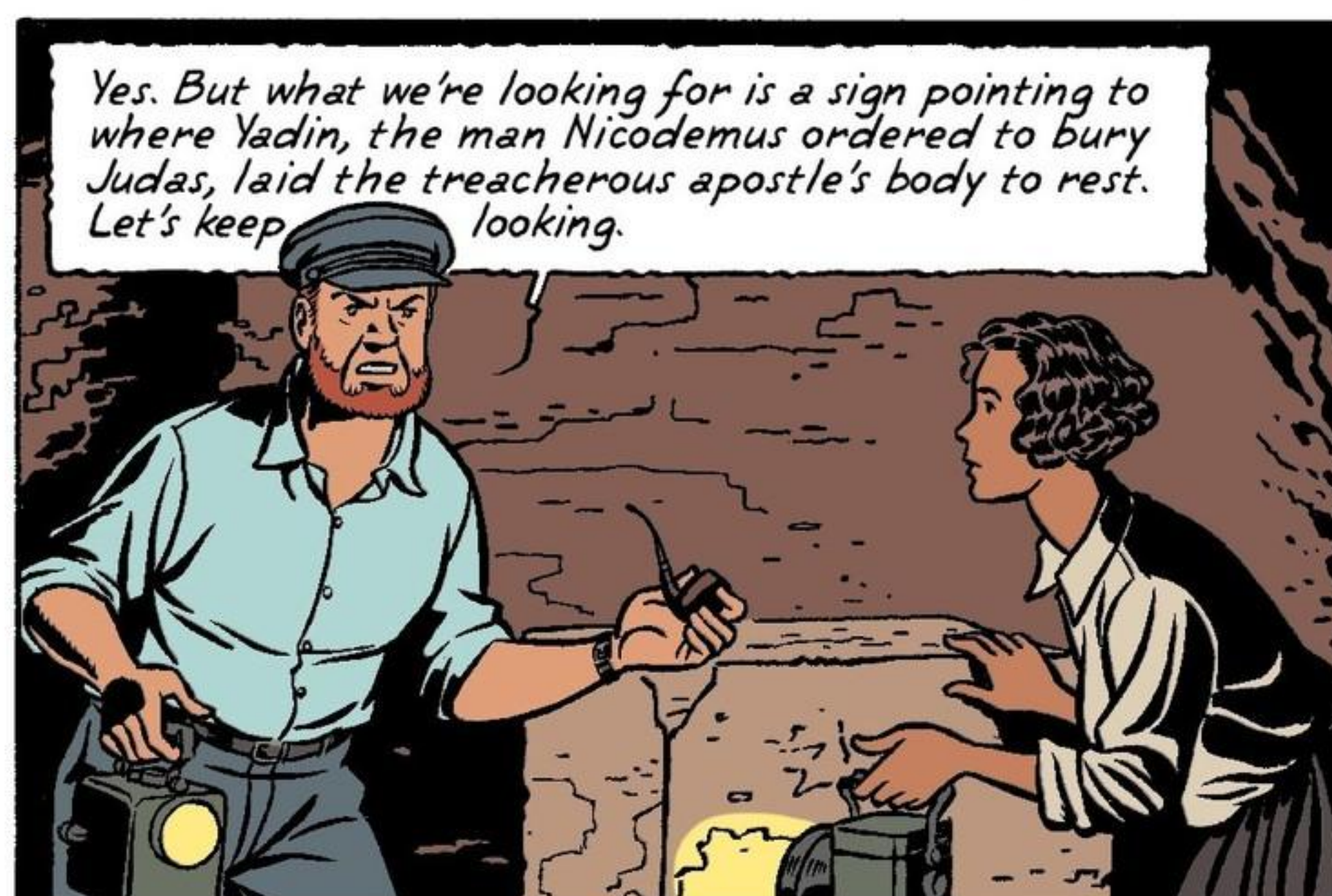
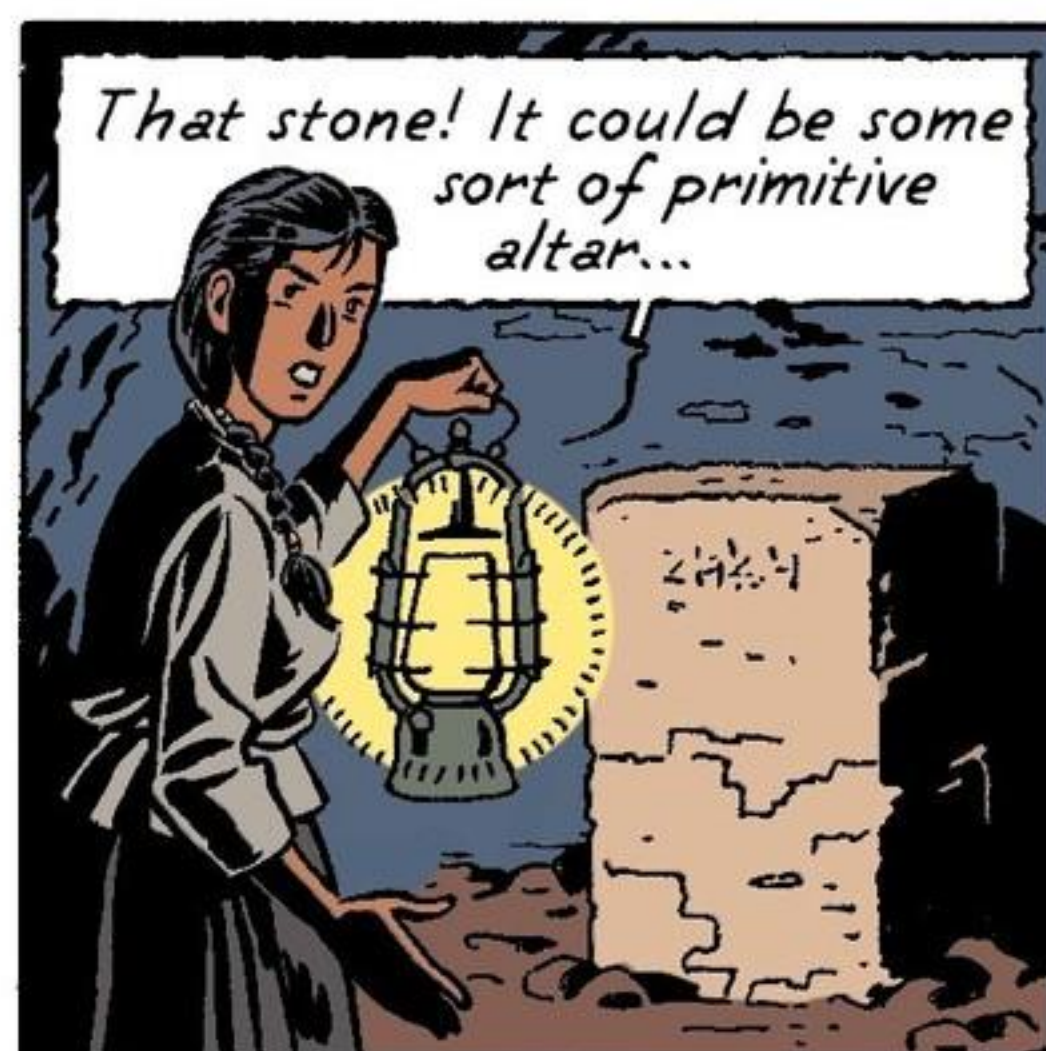
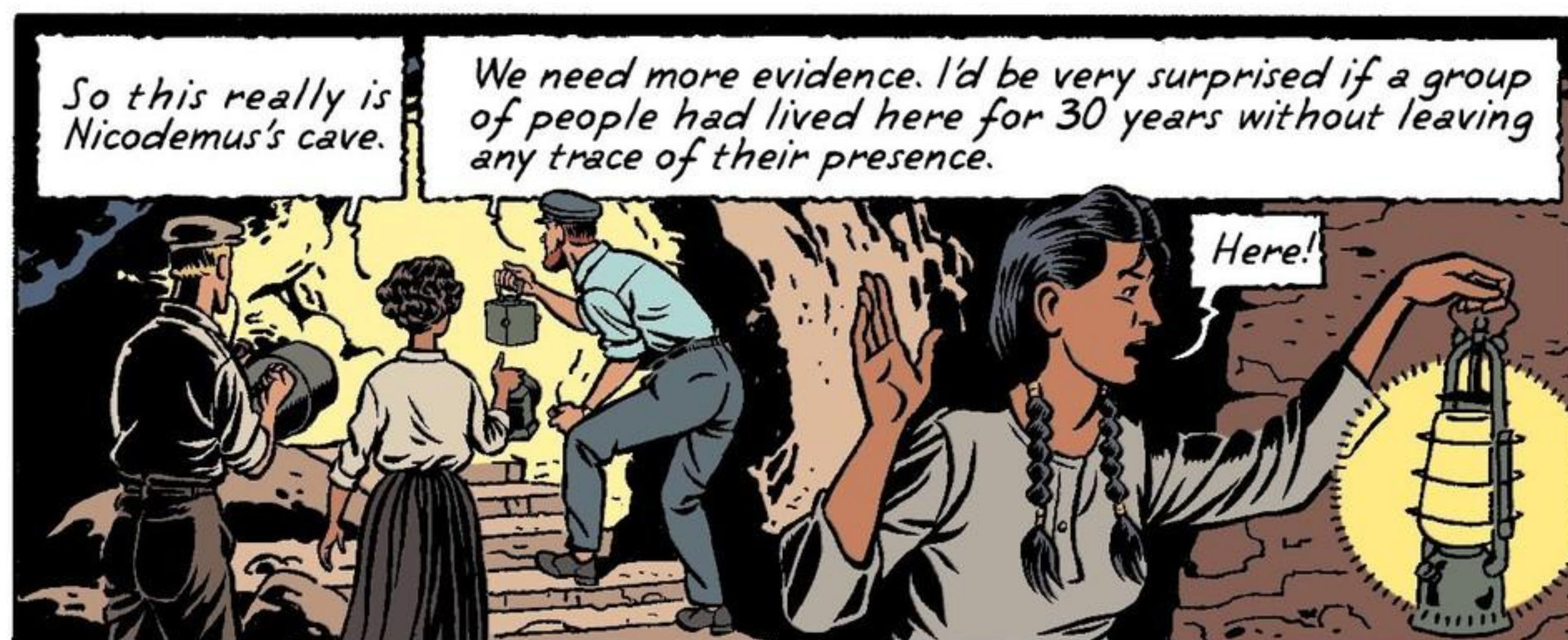
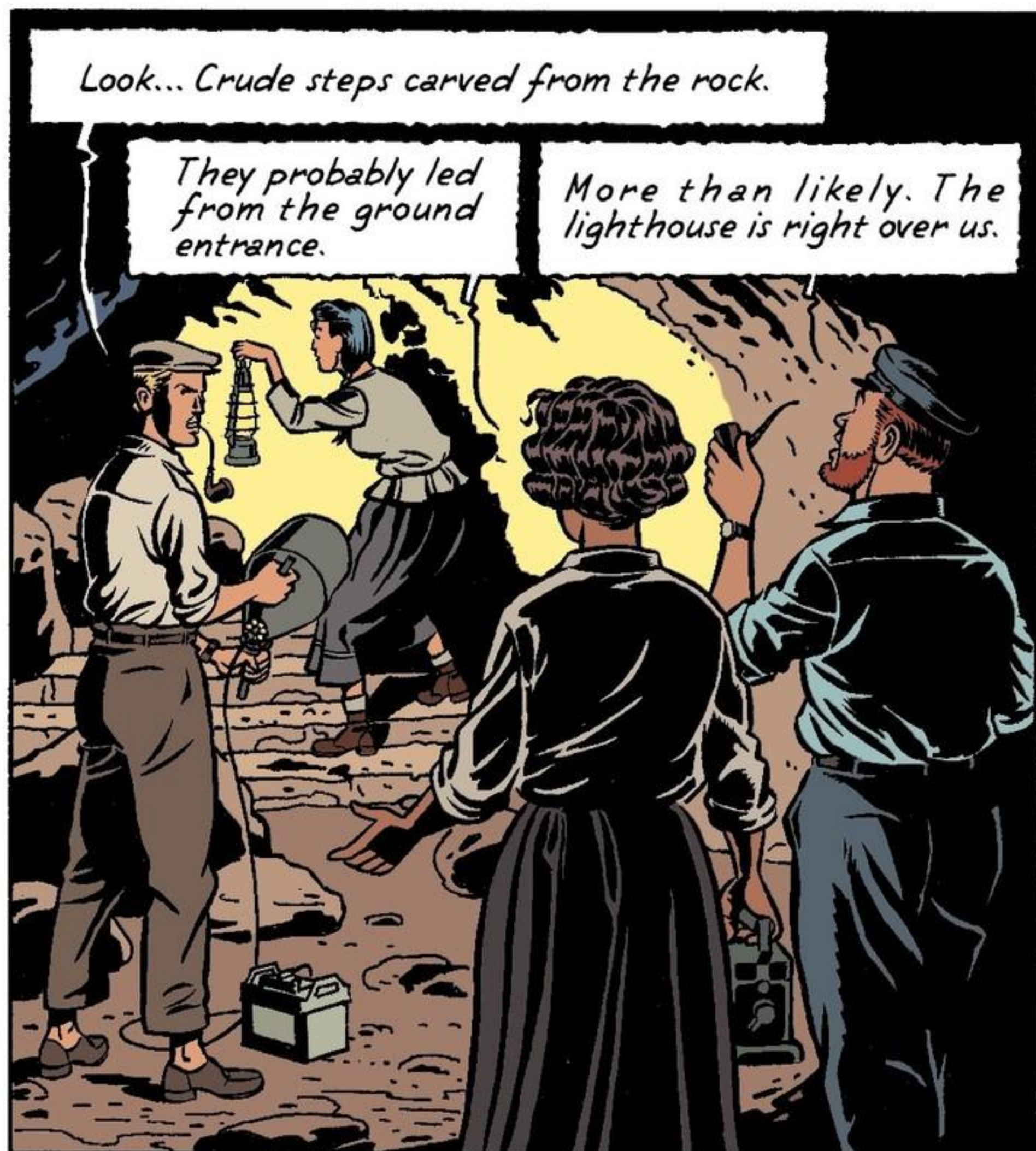
SIEG HEIL!

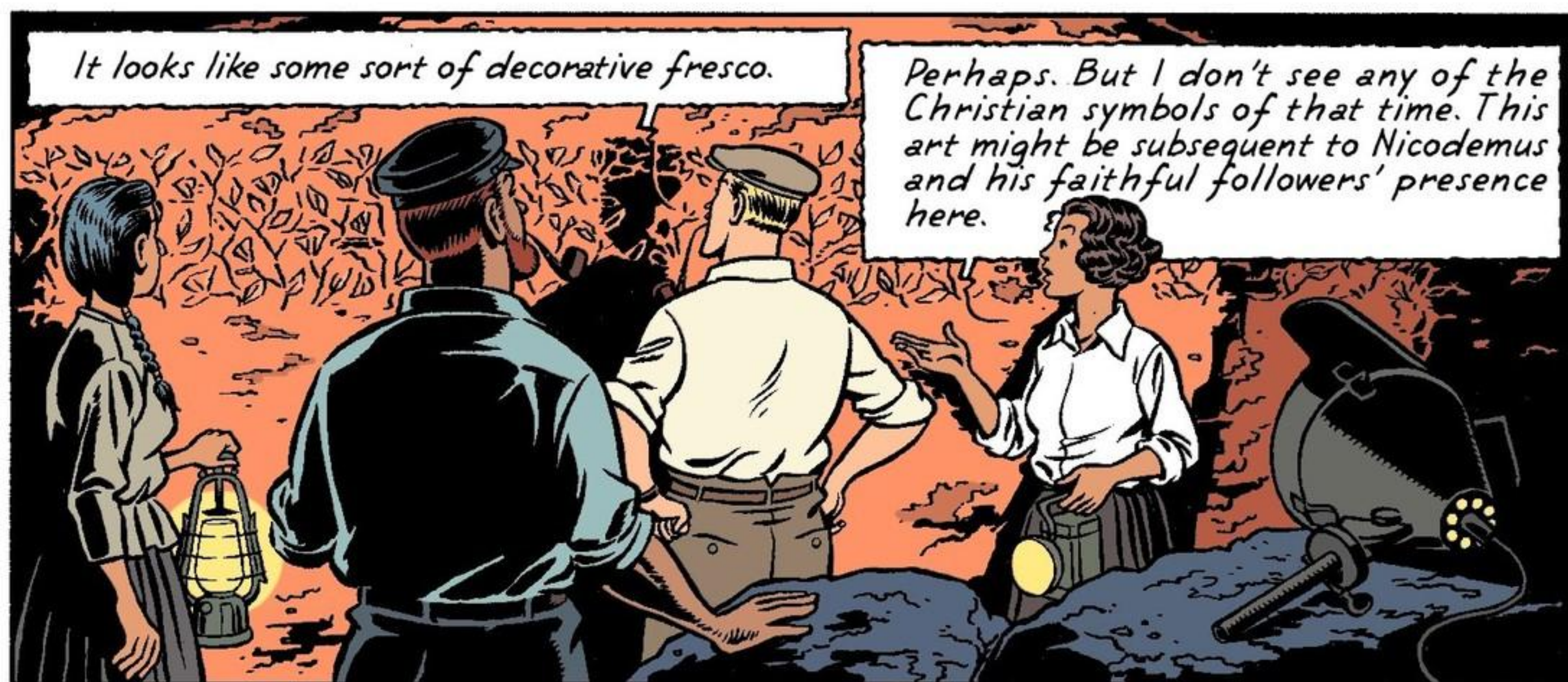


THE NEXT MORNING, BLAKE, MORTIMER, JESSIE AND ELENI HAVE TAKEN THEIR MOTORBOAT OUT, GUIDED BY LEONIDAS, THEIR HOSTESS'S YOUNG SON.

According to Mrs Daskalides, there's only one cave on the island, just below the lighthouse. So it has to be that one.







It looks like some sort of decorative fresco.

Perhaps. But I don't see any of the Christian symbols of that time. This art might be subsequent to Nicodemus and his faithful followers' presence here.



If only we could photograph it so we can study it at will.

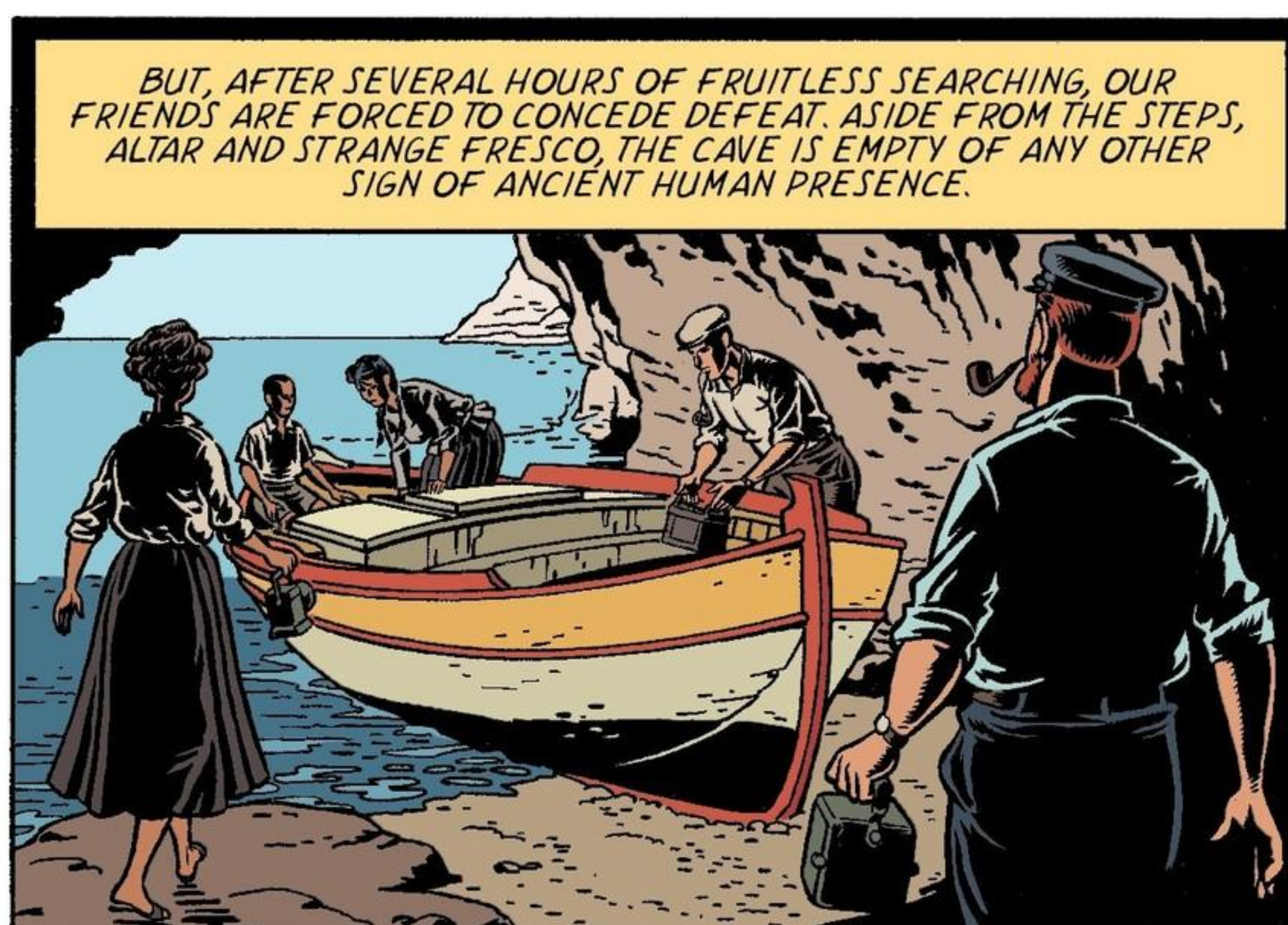
I doubt we'll be able to find a camera in the village.



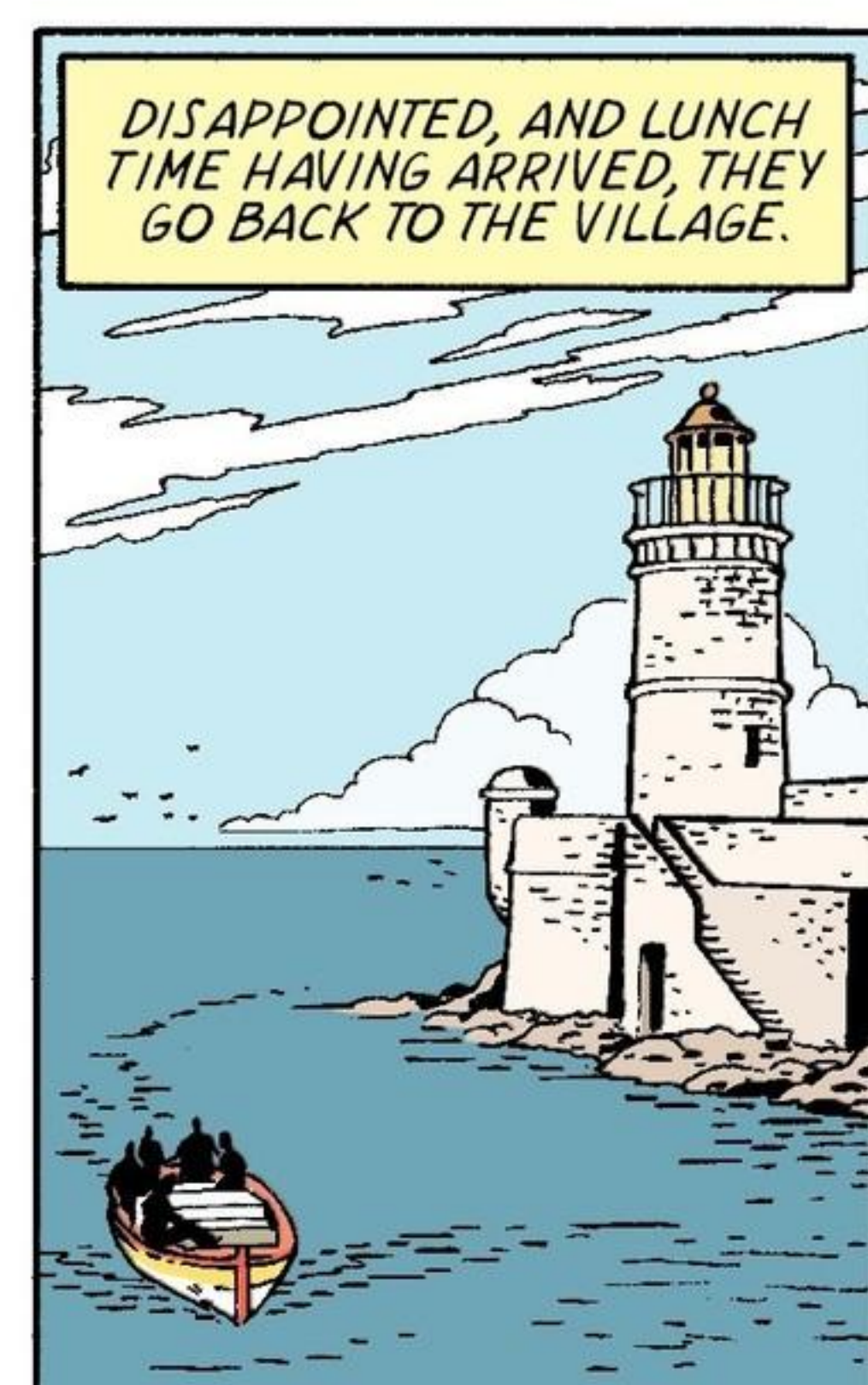
Well, then, if need be we'll come back with paper and pencil and try to copy it. Strange... I have the feeling I've seen these patterns somewhere before...



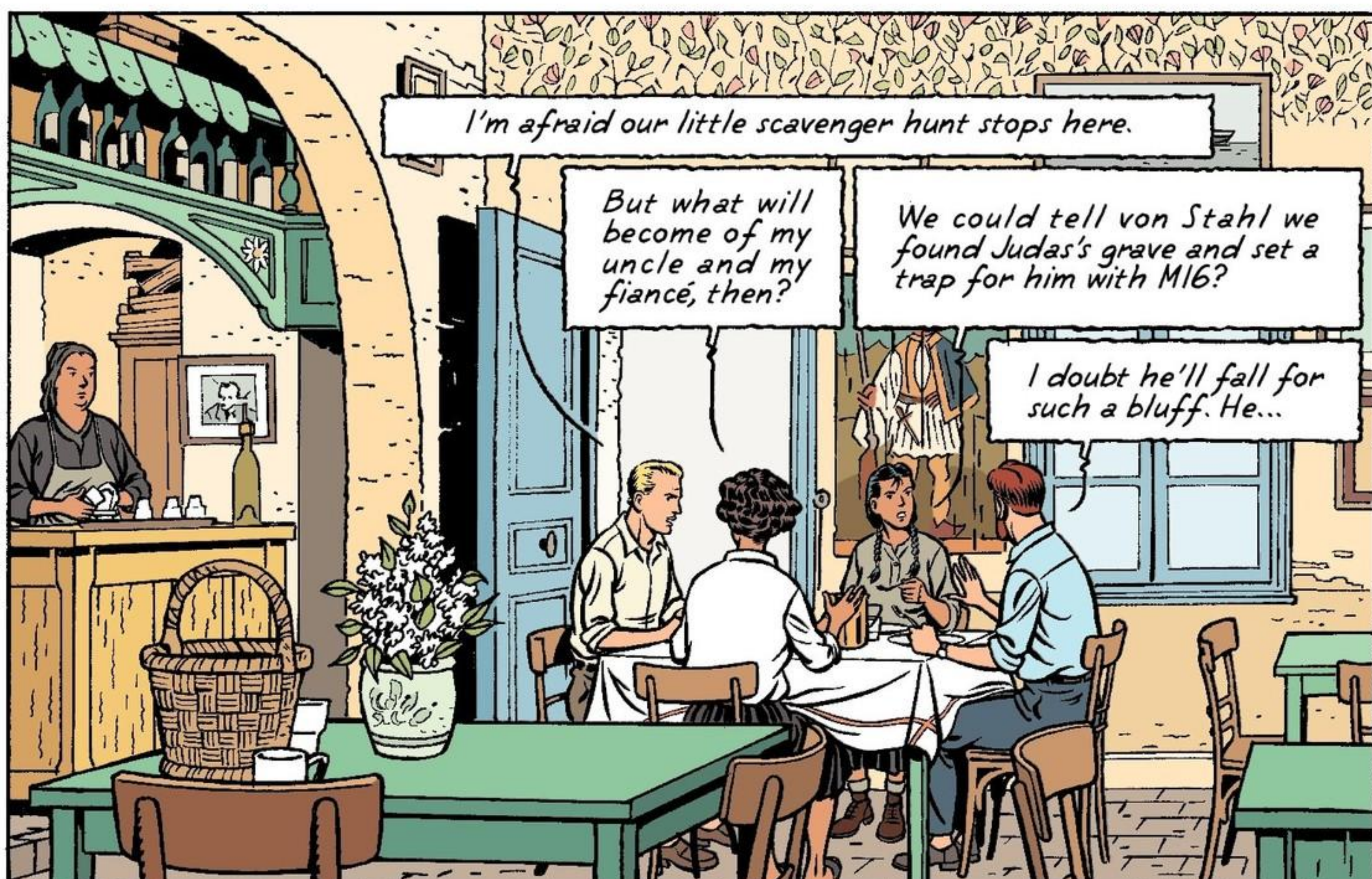
Maybe it'll come back to me. In the meantime, let's try to find other signs.



BUT, AFTER SEVERAL HOURS OF FRUITLESS SEARCHING, OUR FRIENDS ARE FORCED TO CONCEDE DEFEAT. ASIDE FROM THE STEPS, ALTAR AND STRANGE FRESCO, THE CAVE IS EMPTY OF ANY OTHER SIGN OF ANCIENT HUMAN PRESENCE.



DISAPPOINTED, AND LUNCH TIME HAVING ARRIVED, THEY GO BACK TO THE VILLAGE.



I'm afraid our little scavenger hunt stops here.

But what will become of my uncle and my fiancé, then?

We could tell von Stahl we found Judas's grave and set a trap for him with M16?

I doubt he'll fall for such a bluff. He...



THERE!!...

?



The fresco! It's the same one! I knew I'd seen it somewhere before.

Eleni, please ask our hostess why she has this mural in here.



WITH OUR FRIENDS WATCHING HER INTENTLY, MRS DASKALIDES CHEERFULLY ANSWERS ELENI...



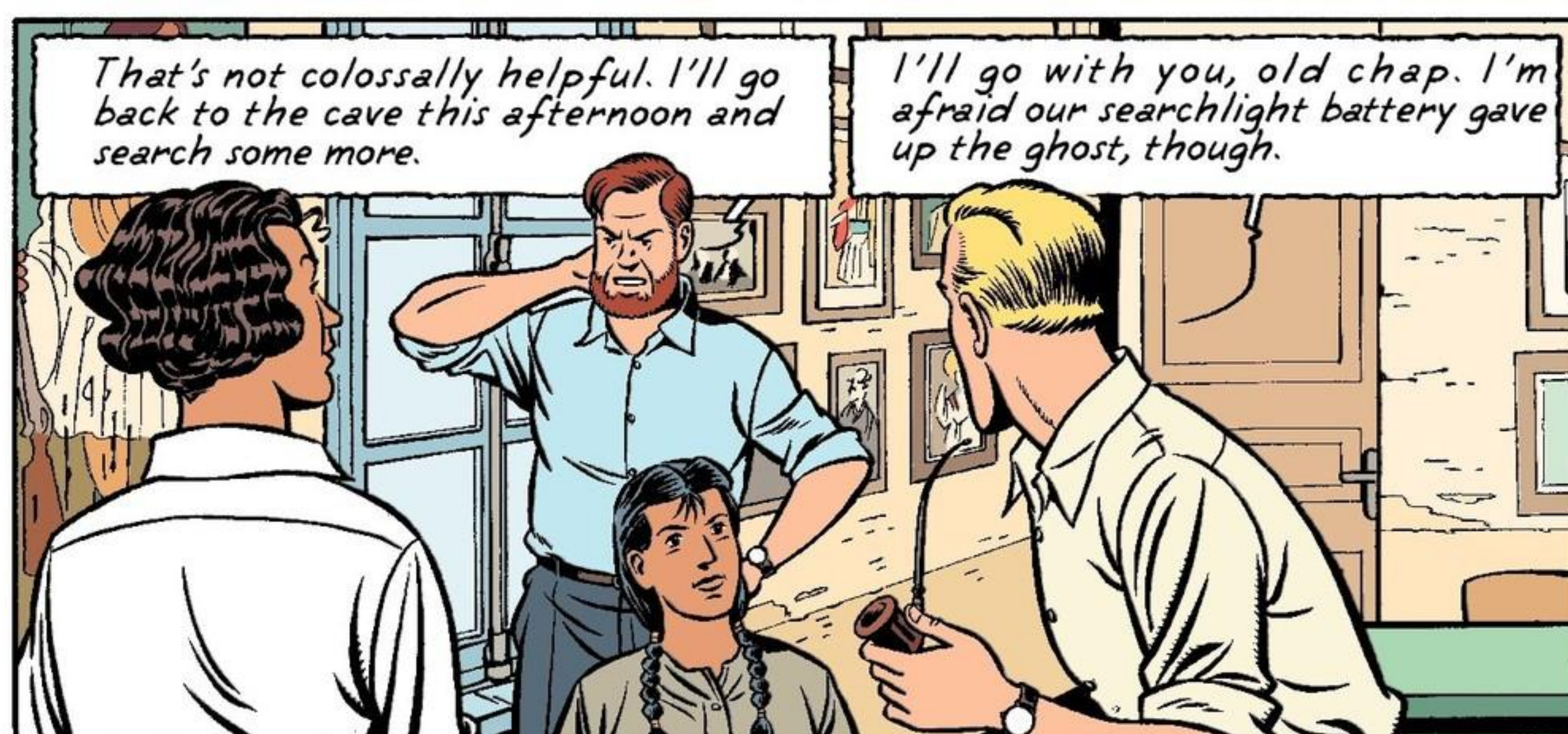
... WHO IMMEDIATELY COMES BACK TO REPORT.

It's simple. Everyone here knows about the cave, and about those signs carved in the rock. The late Mr Daskalides, who was a gifted artist, reproduced them on this wall to amuse his customers.



Does she know what their meaning is, by any chance?

No. It's merely a pretty painting to her. As you can imagine, the inhabitants of Syrenios know nothing of Nicodemus's Christians' stay on their island.



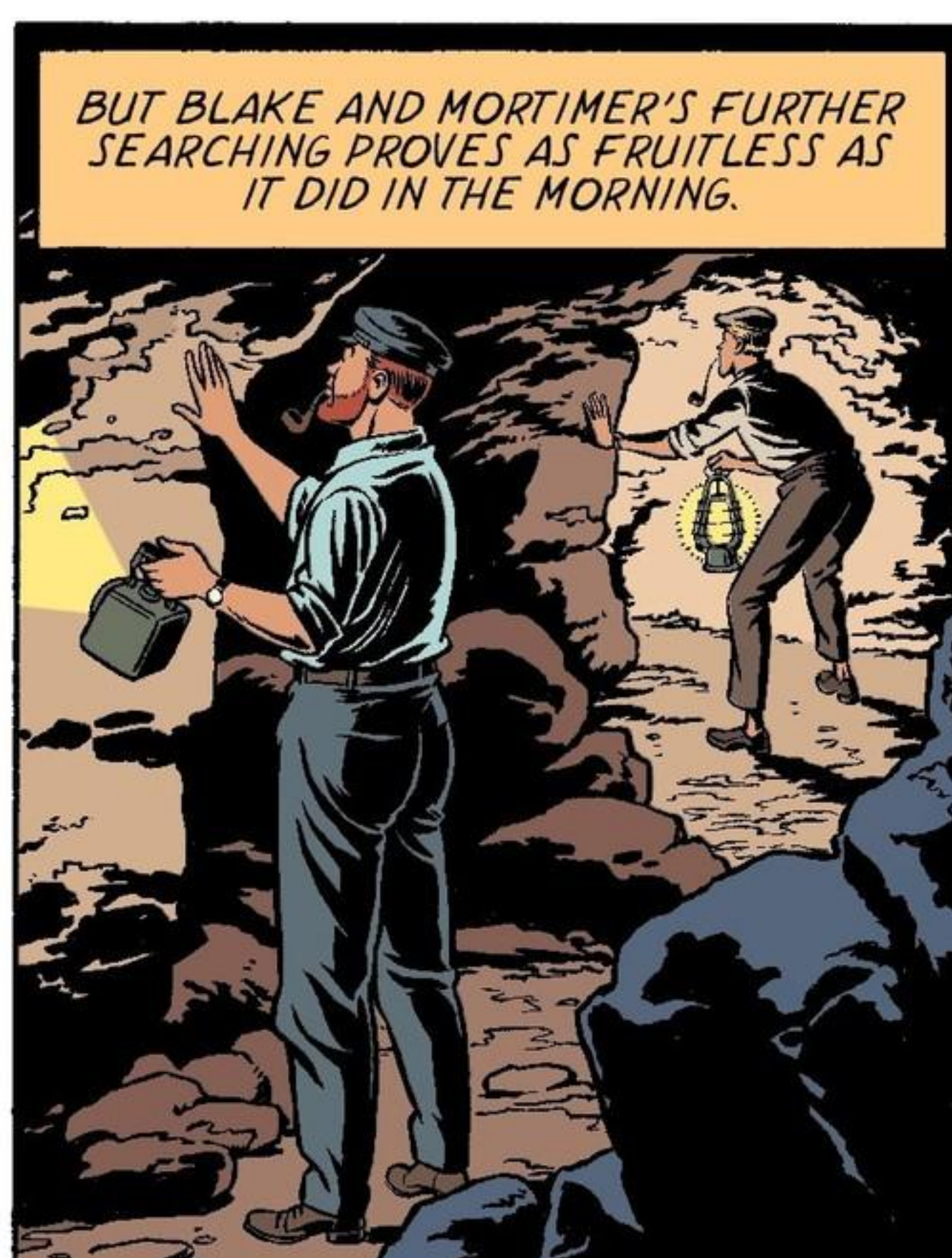
That's not colossally helpful. I'll go back to the cave this afternoon and search some more.

I'll go with you, old chap. I'm afraid our searchlight battery gave up the ghost, though.

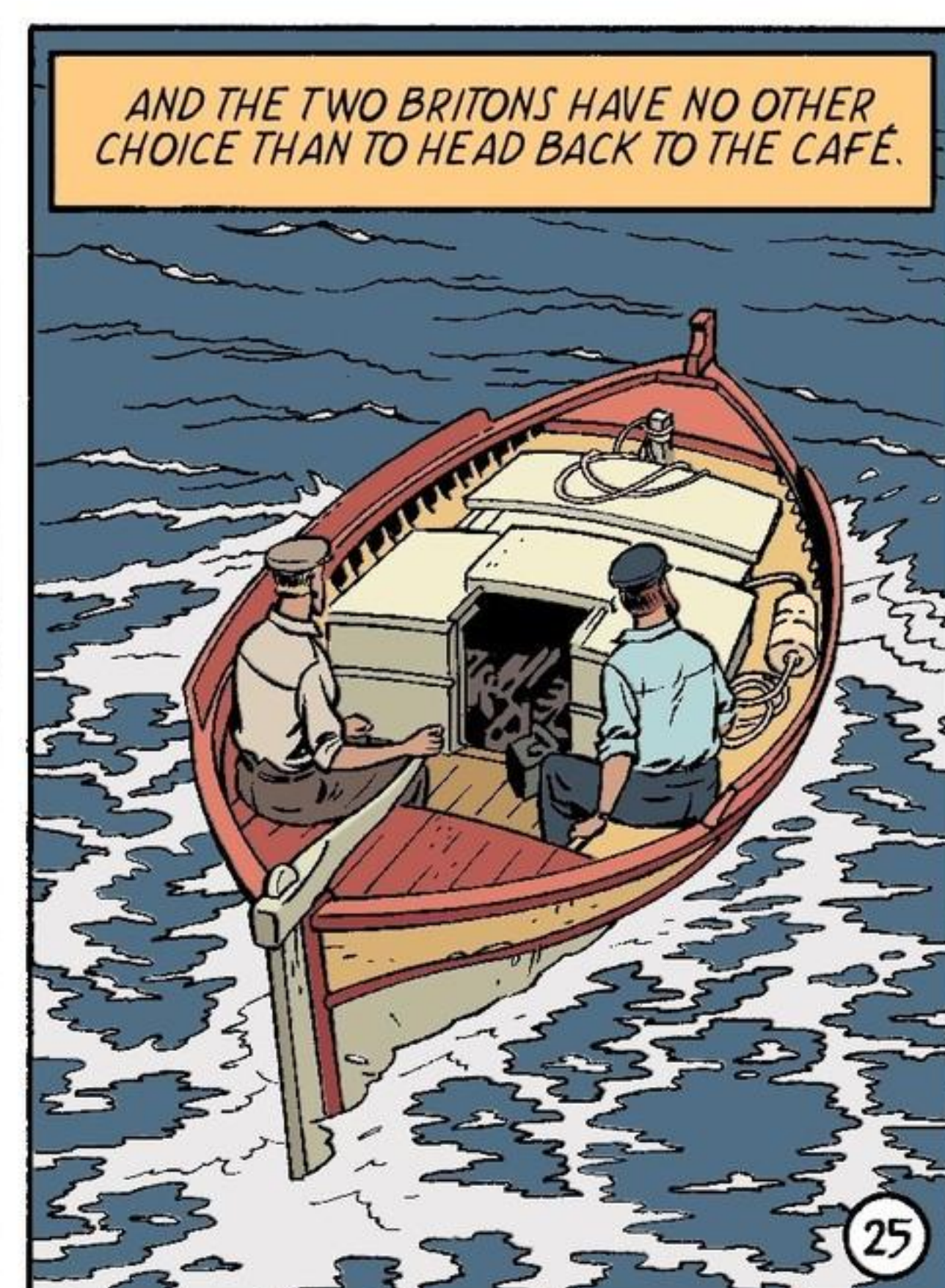


Well, in the meantime I'll try to find myself a dress a little more cheerful than the one provided by our kind hostess. Could you come with me, Eleni? I'll need an interpreter.

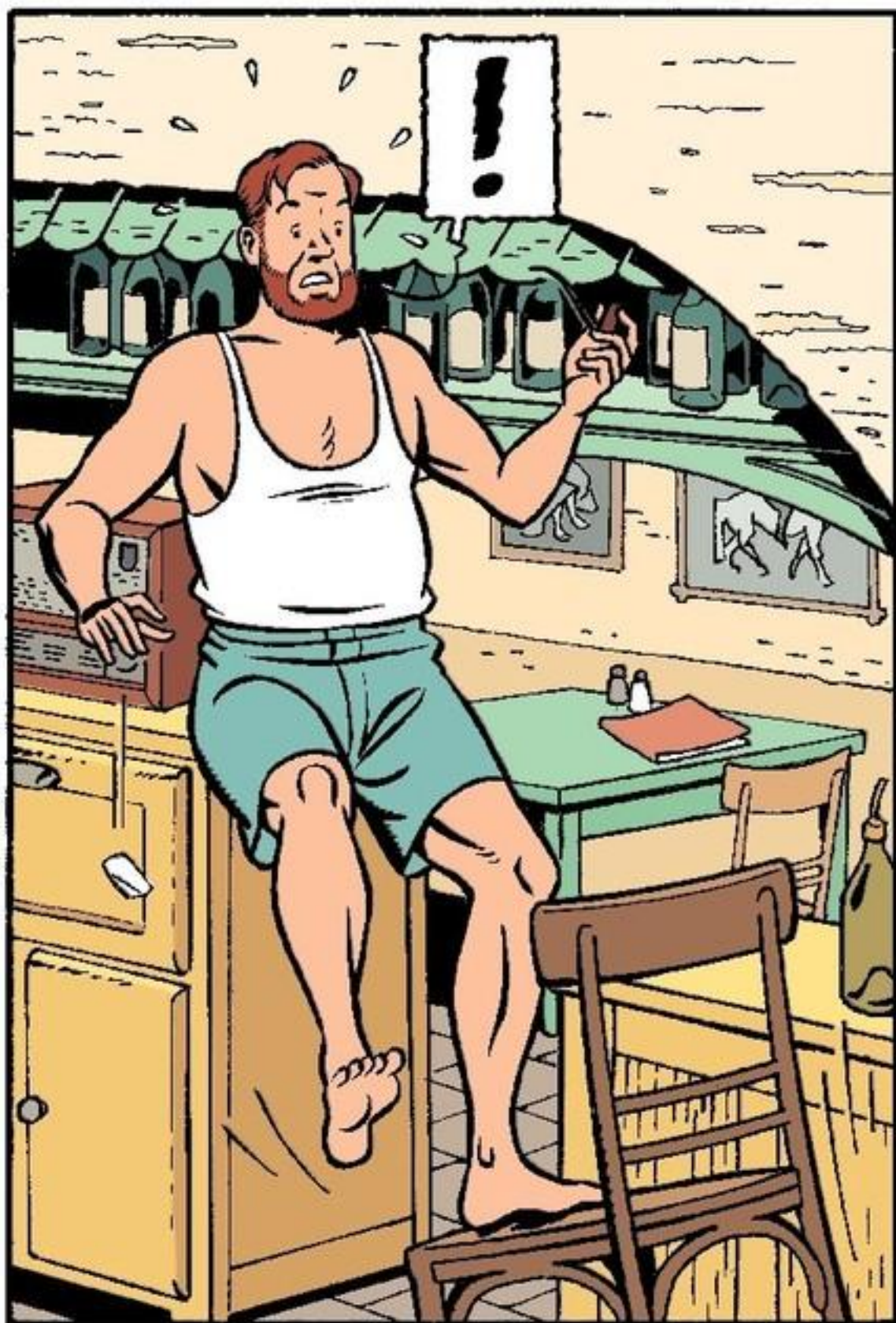
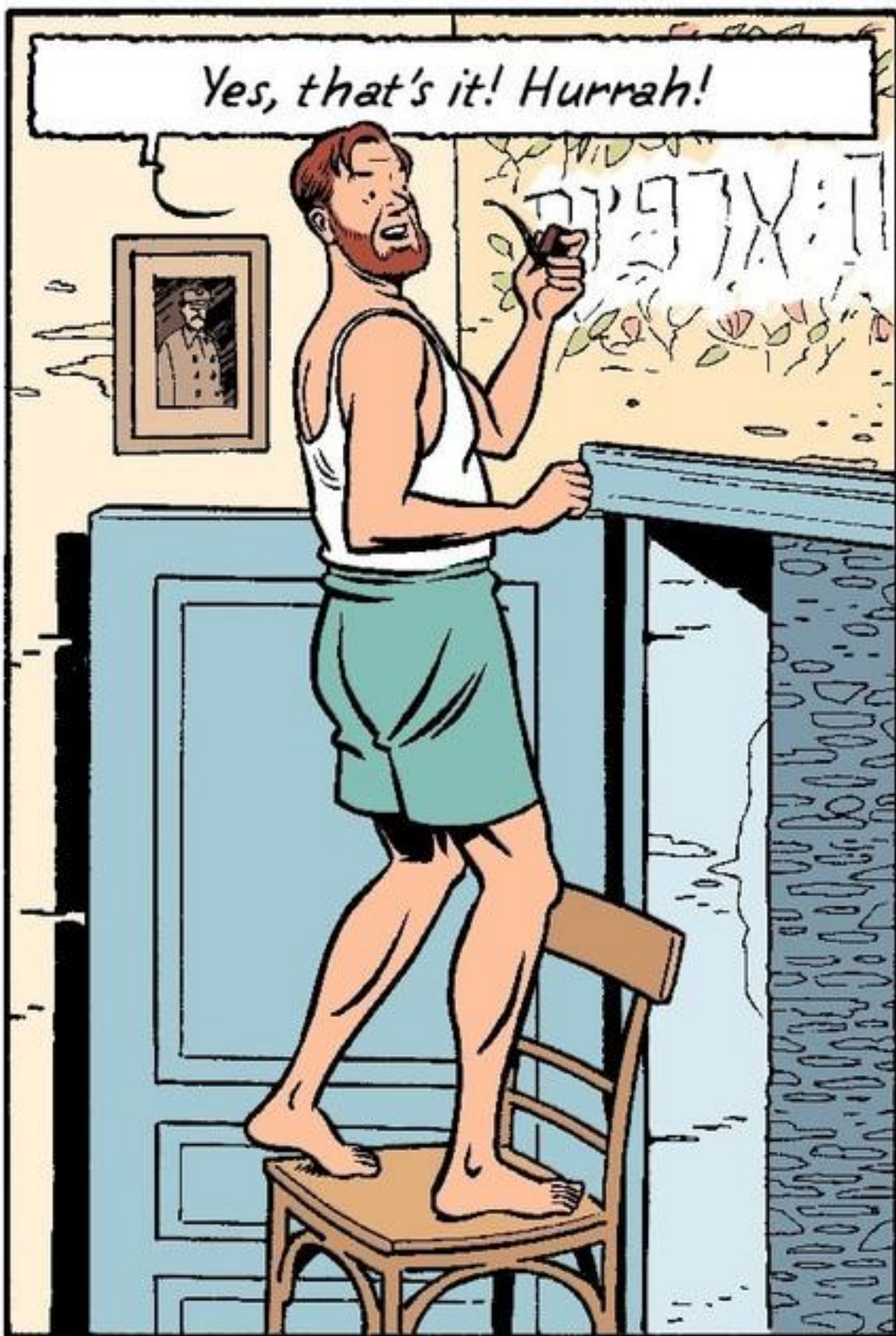
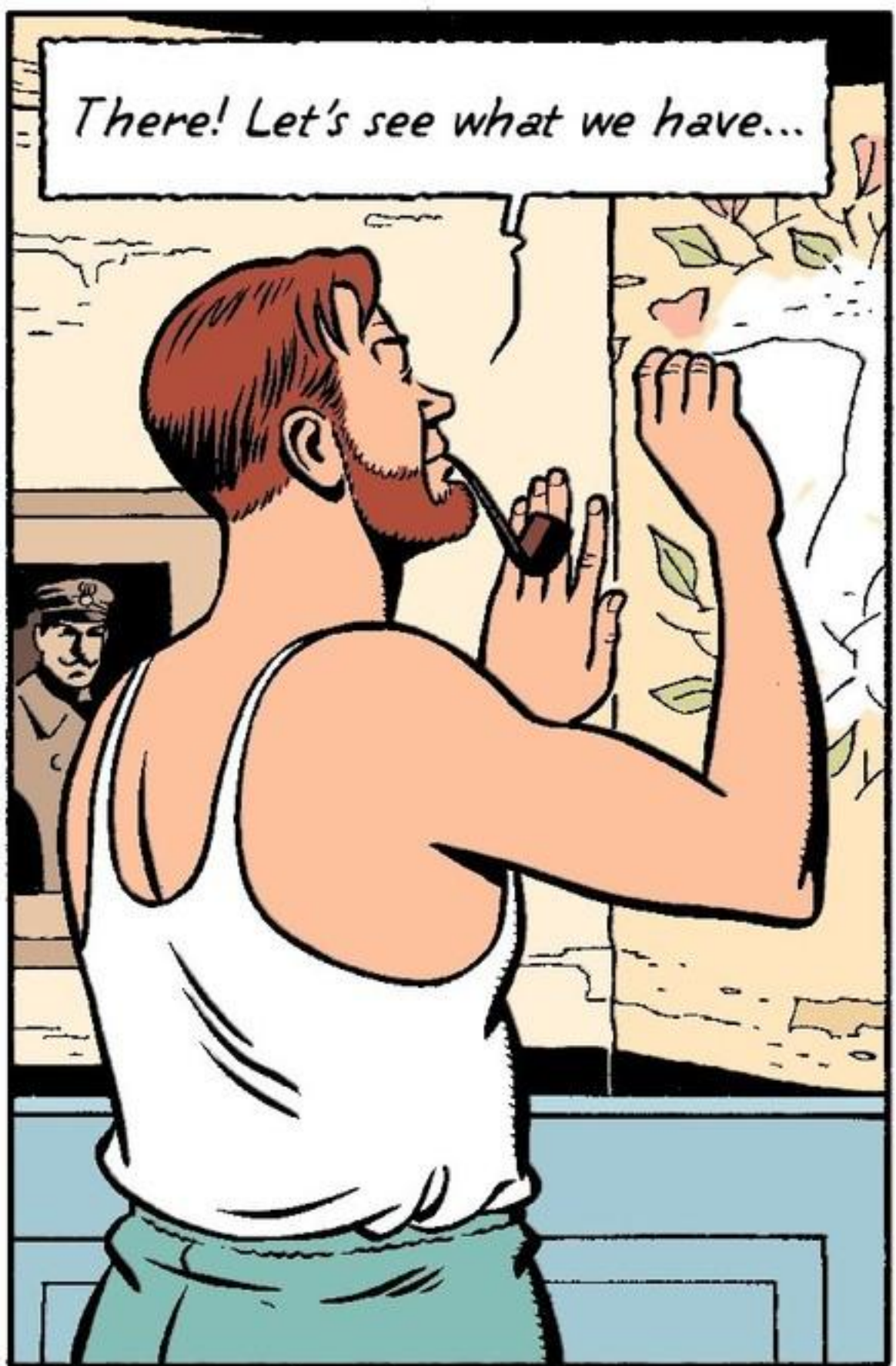
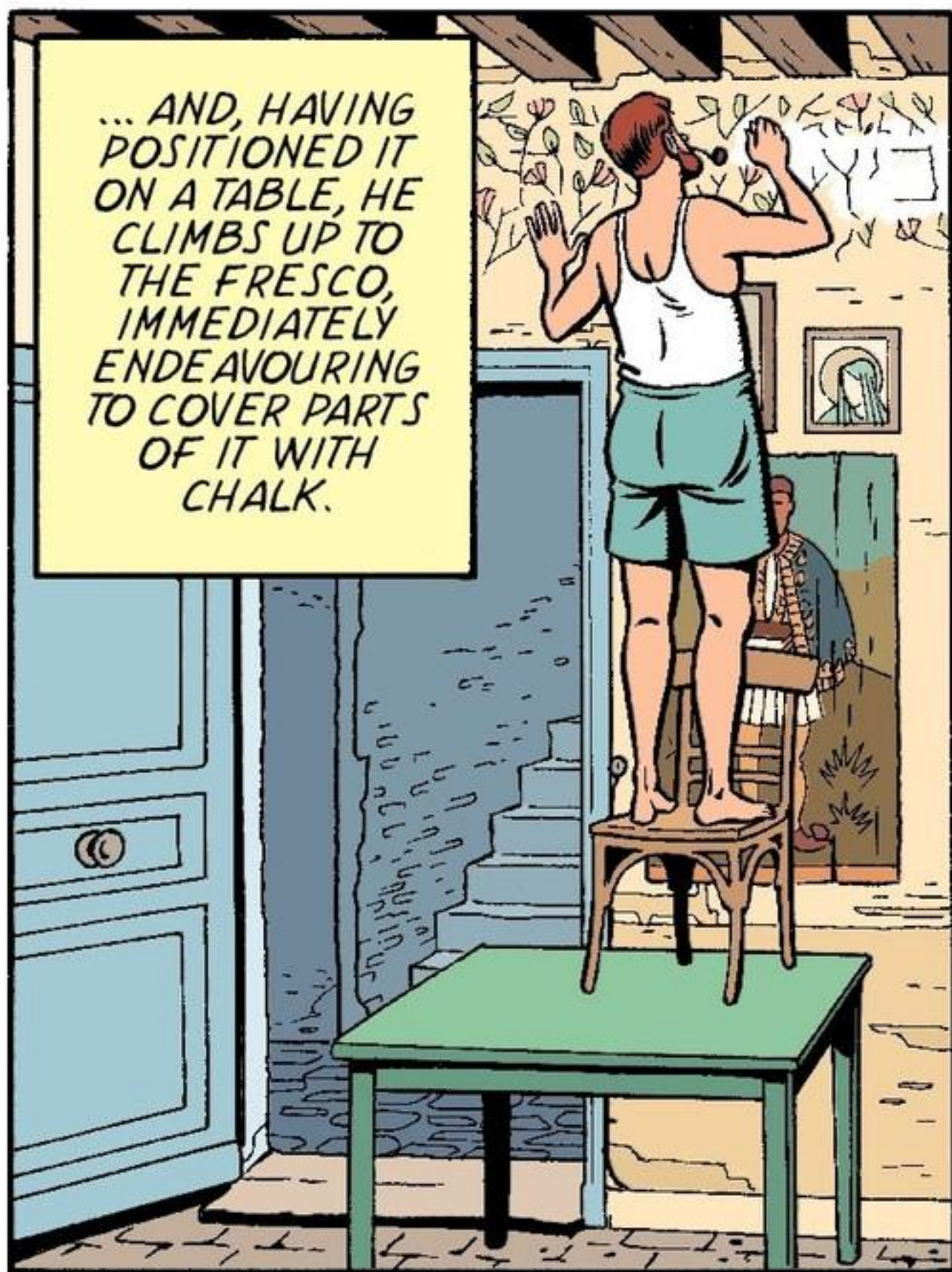
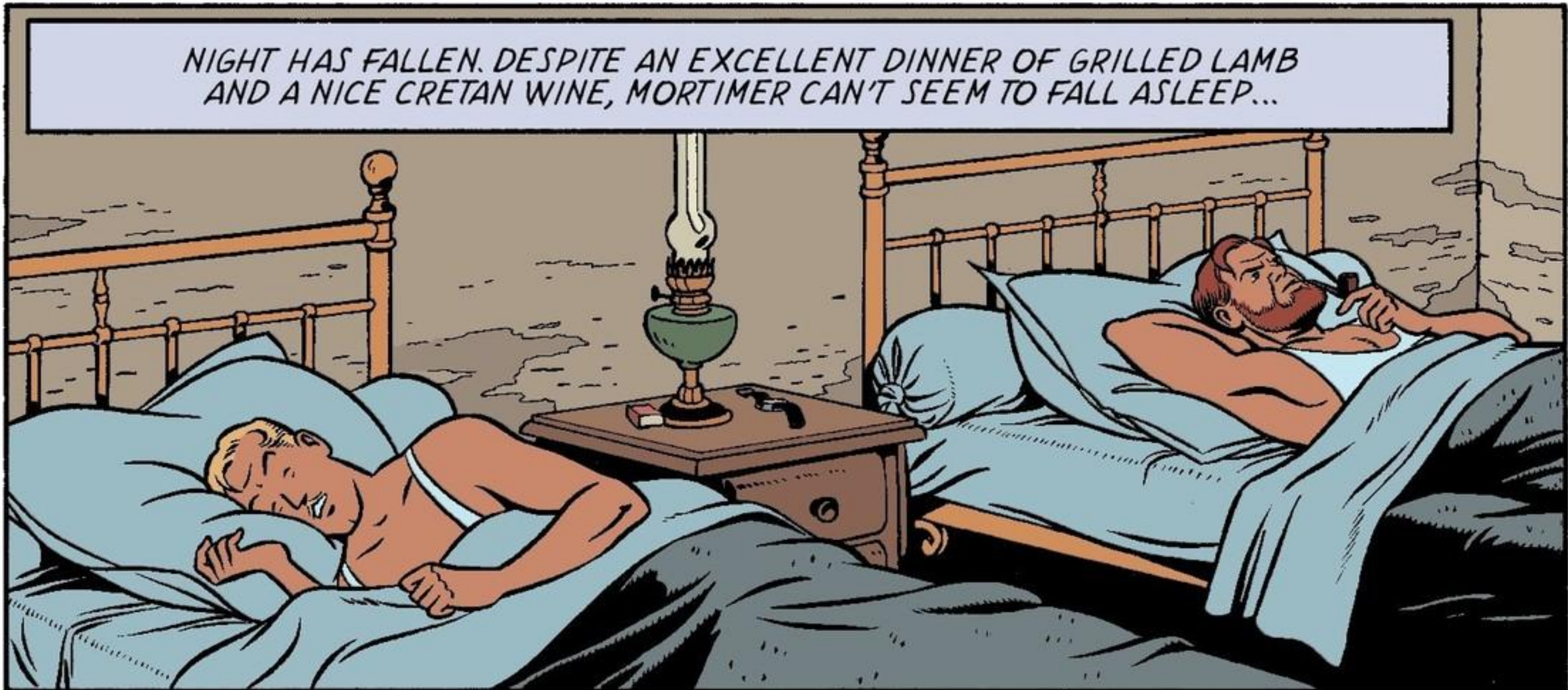
Gladly. I could do with something a little nicer myself.

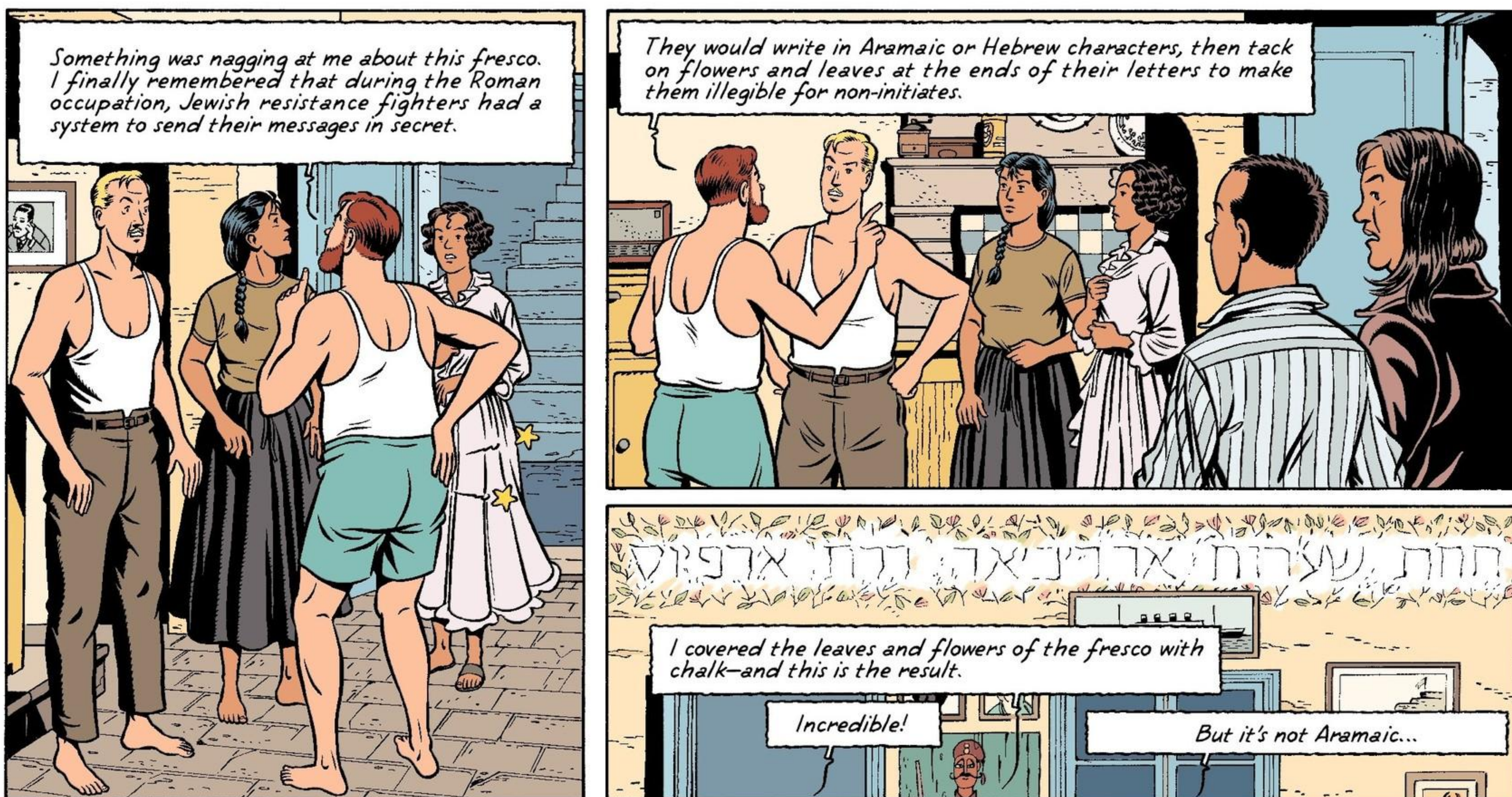


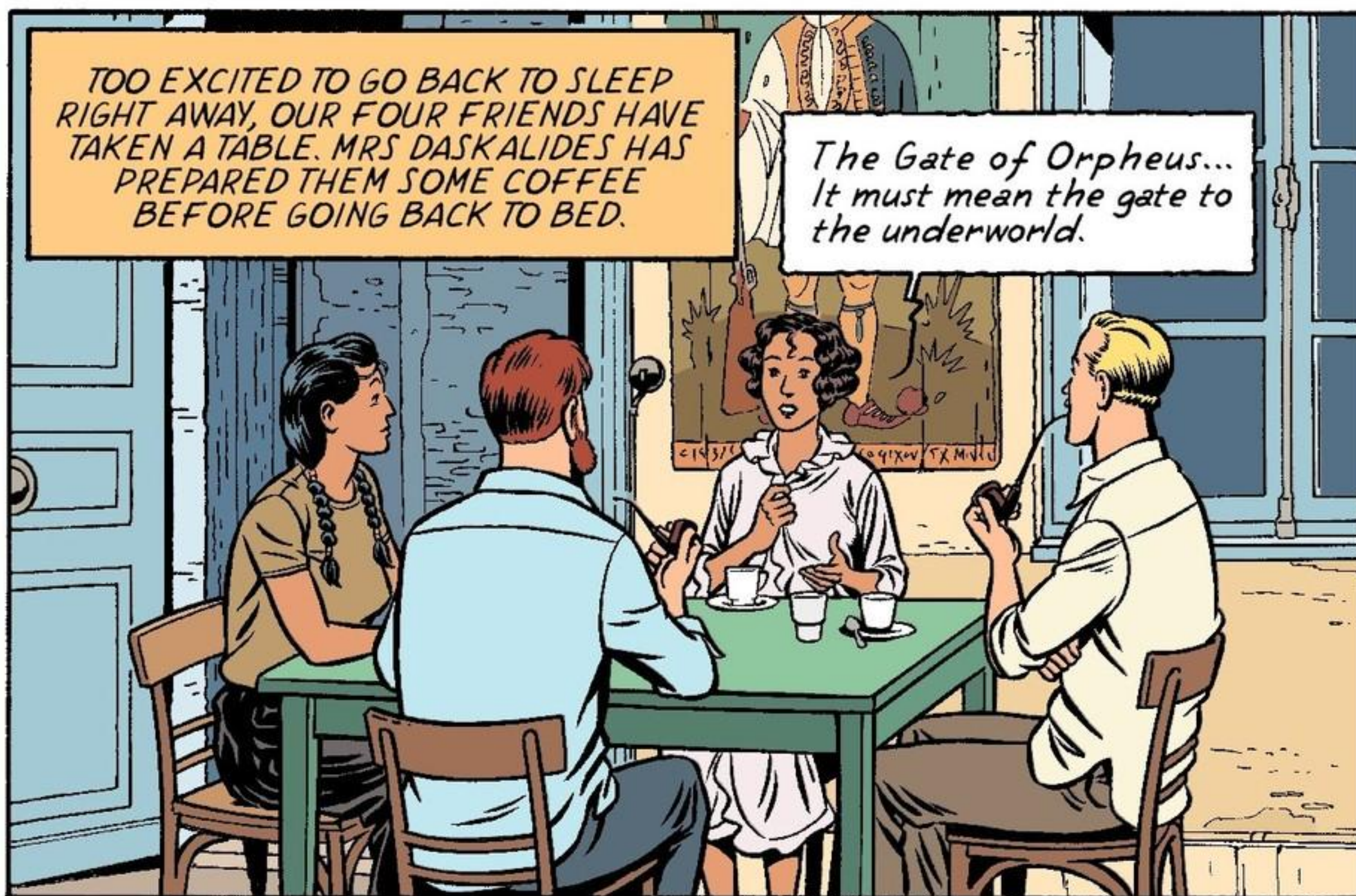
BUT BLAKE AND MORTIMER'S FURTHER SEARCHING PROVES AS FRUITLESS AS IT DID IN THE MORNING.



AND THE TWO BRITONS HAVE NO OTHER CHOICE THAN TO HEAD BACK TO THE CAFÉ.







TOO EXCITED TO GO BACK TO SLEEP RIGHT AWAY, OUR FOUR FRIENDS HAVE TAKEN A TABLE. MRS DASKALIDES HAS PREPARED THEM SOME COFFEE BEFORE GOING BACK TO BED.

The Gate of Orpheus... It must mean the gate to the underworld.



It must. The underworld—the kingdom of Hades—where Orpheus went to try to save his Eurydice. Where does tradition place that gate, Eleni?

In the Cave of Acherusia, in Epirus. A mountainous area in northwest Greece, near the Albanian border.



That's on the other side of the country!

Indeed. Nicodemus told Yadin to bury Judas as far away from Syrenios as possible, and the brave boy took three months to go there and come back in his boat. It fits.



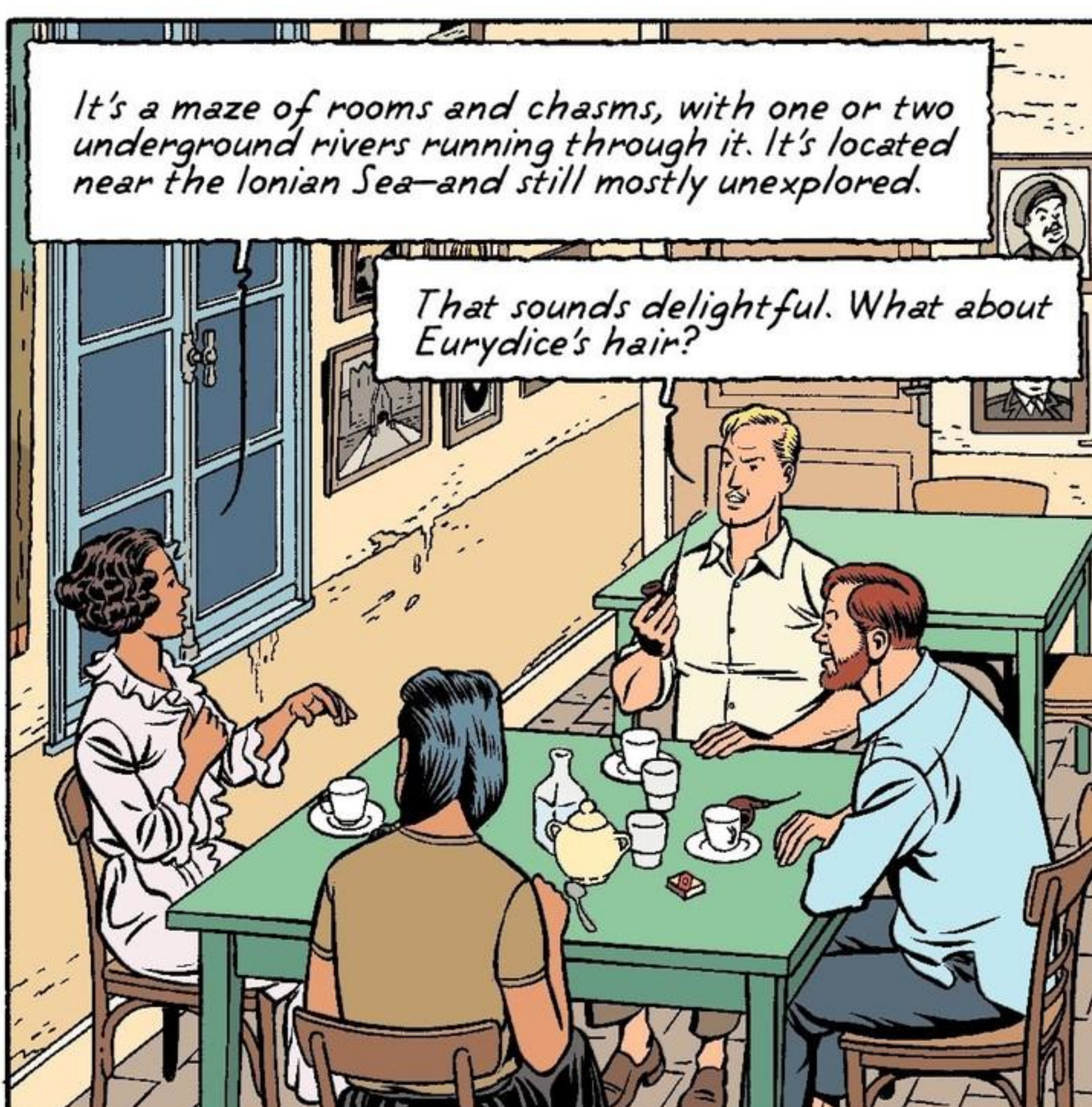
The gate to hell!... Quite an appropriate place to bury the traitor Judas.

For all that he was Christian, Nicodemus probably knew all about Greek mythology. It might have been he who told his follower about that place.



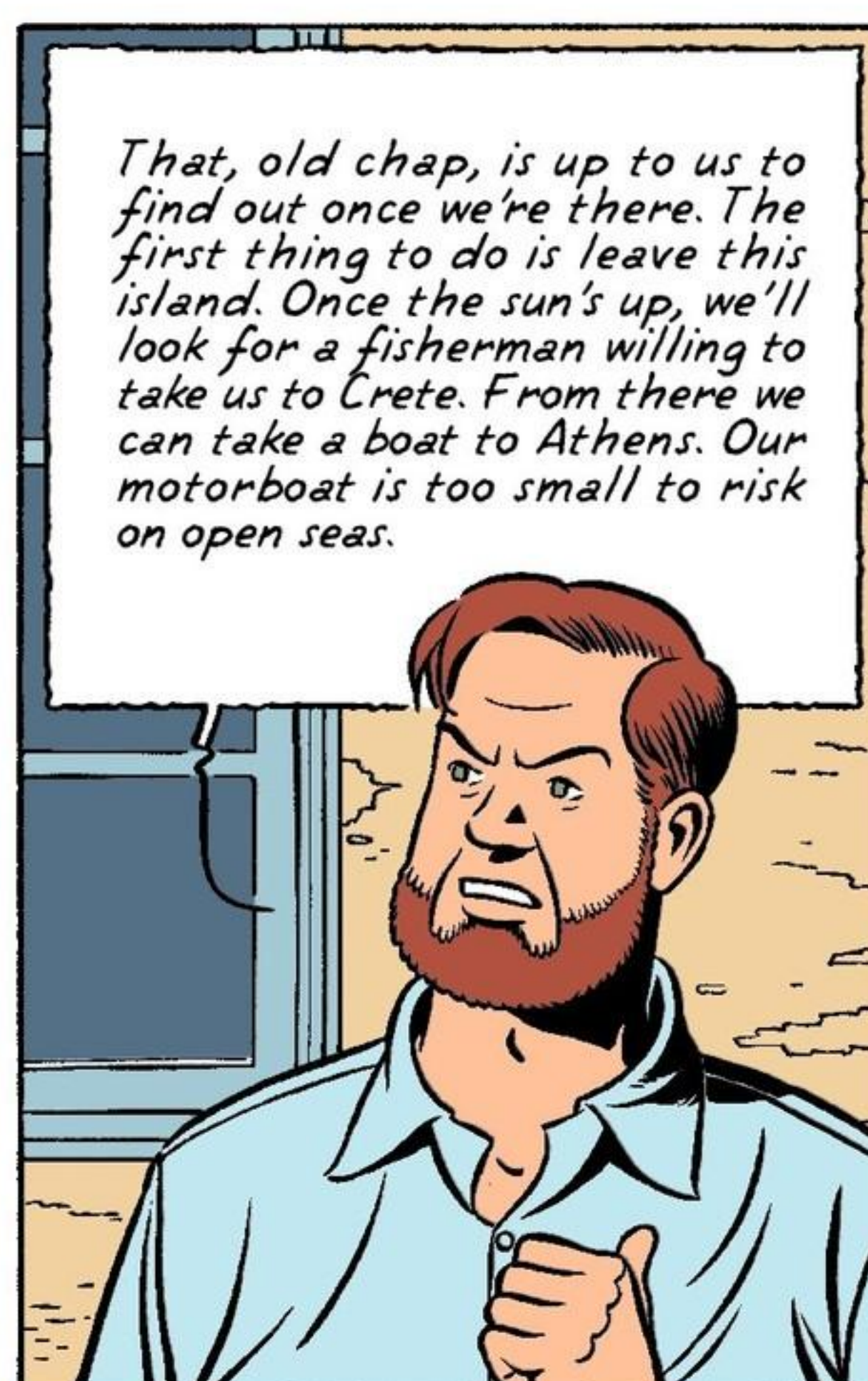
Obviously, none of this is certain. For our purpose, though, it's still the best possibility.

So, Epirus will be our next destination. What does this Cave of Acherusia look like?



It's a maze of rooms and chasms, with one or two underground rivers running through it. It's located near the Ionian Sea—and still mostly unexplored.

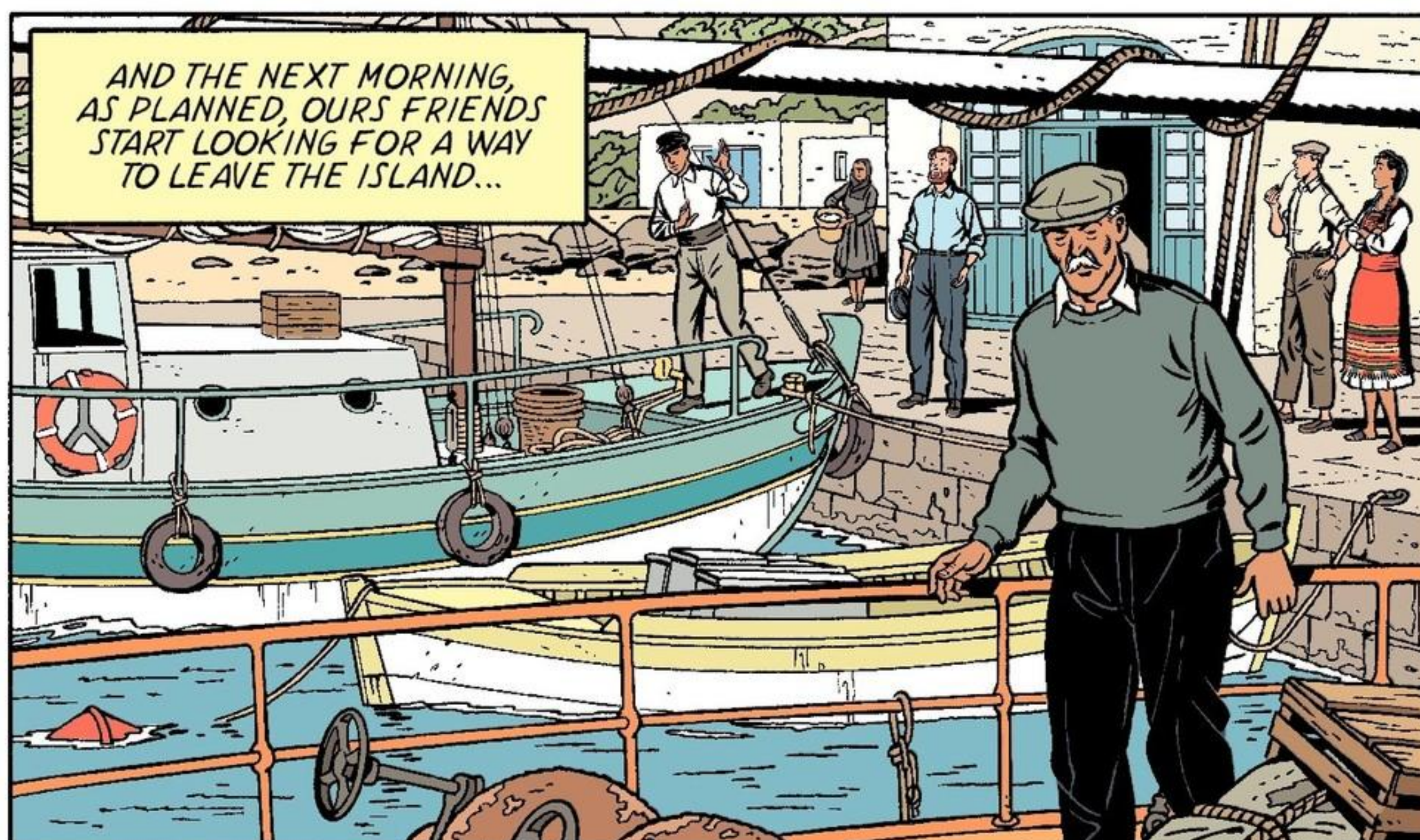
That sounds delightful. What about Eurydice's hair?



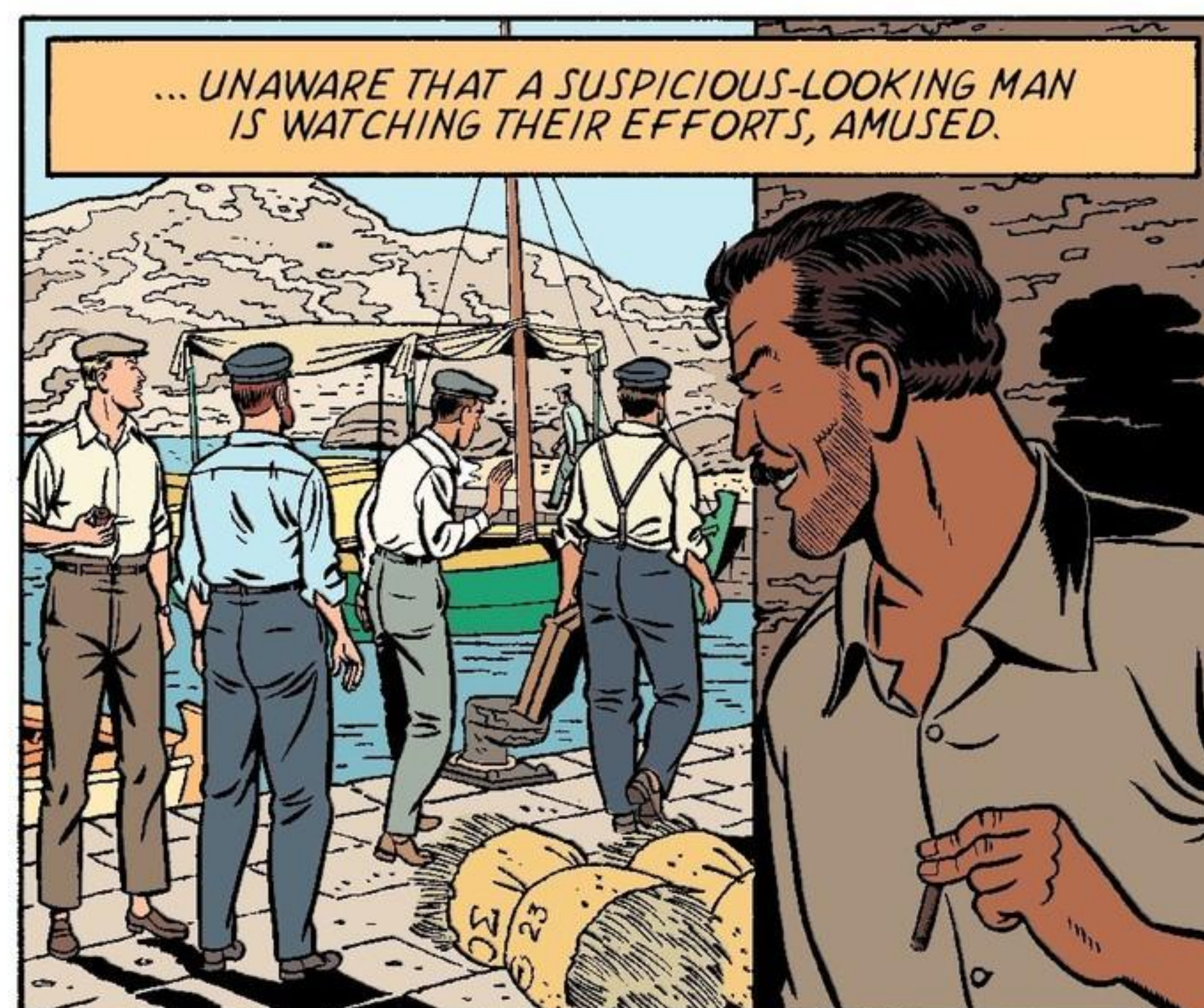
That, old chap, is up to us to find out once we're there. The first thing to do is leave this island. Once the sun's up, we'll look for a fisherman willing to take us to Crete. From there we can take a boat to Athens. Our motorboat is too small to risk on open seas.



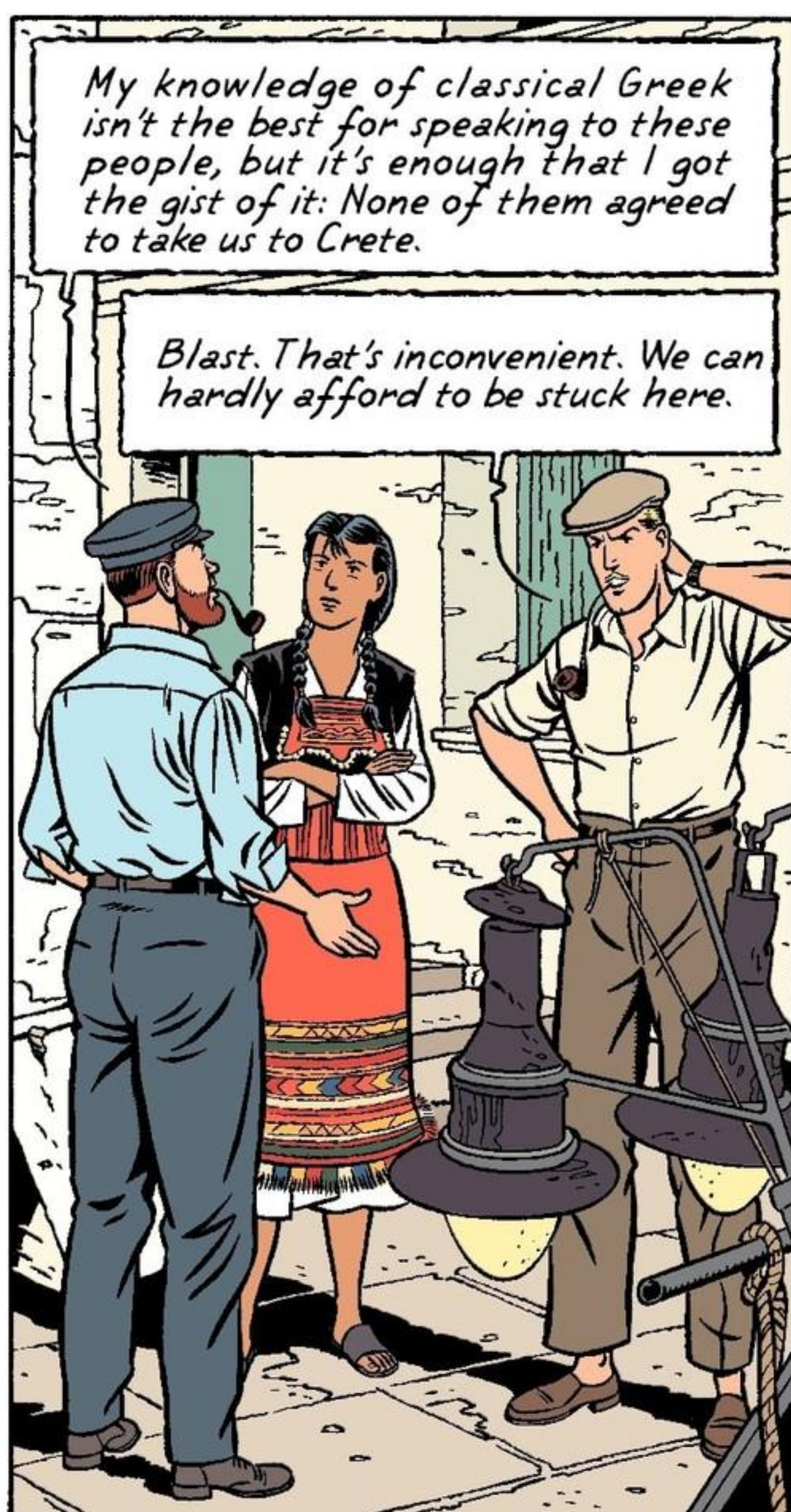
Before that, however, we ought to try and get some more sleep. No doubt the coming days are going to require all our energy.



AND THE NEXT MORNING, AS PLANNED, OURS FRIENDS START LOOKING FOR A WAY TO LEAVE THE ISLAND...

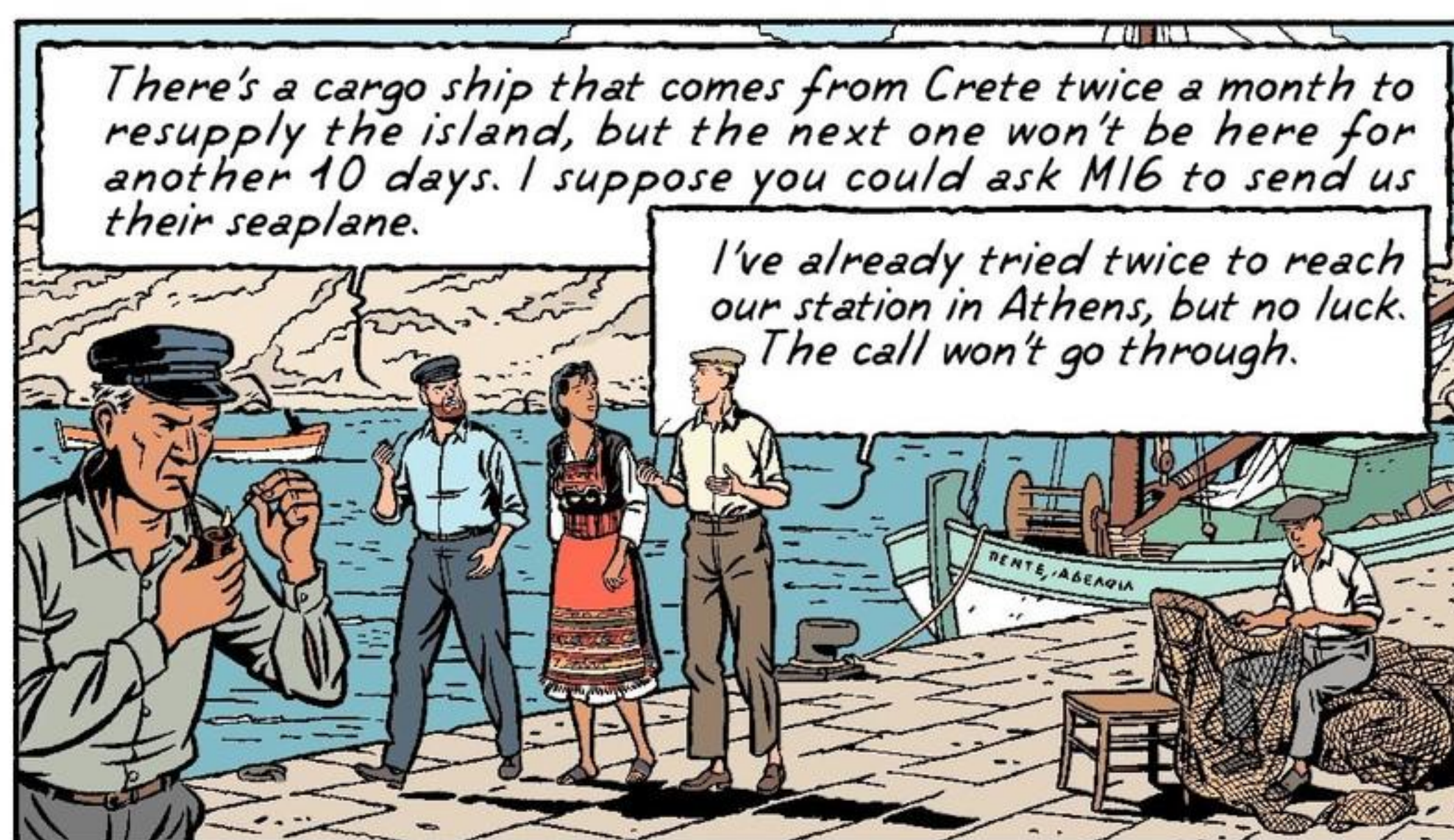


... UNAWARE THAT A SUSPICIOUS-LOOKING MAN IS WATCHING THEIR EFFORTS, AMUSED.



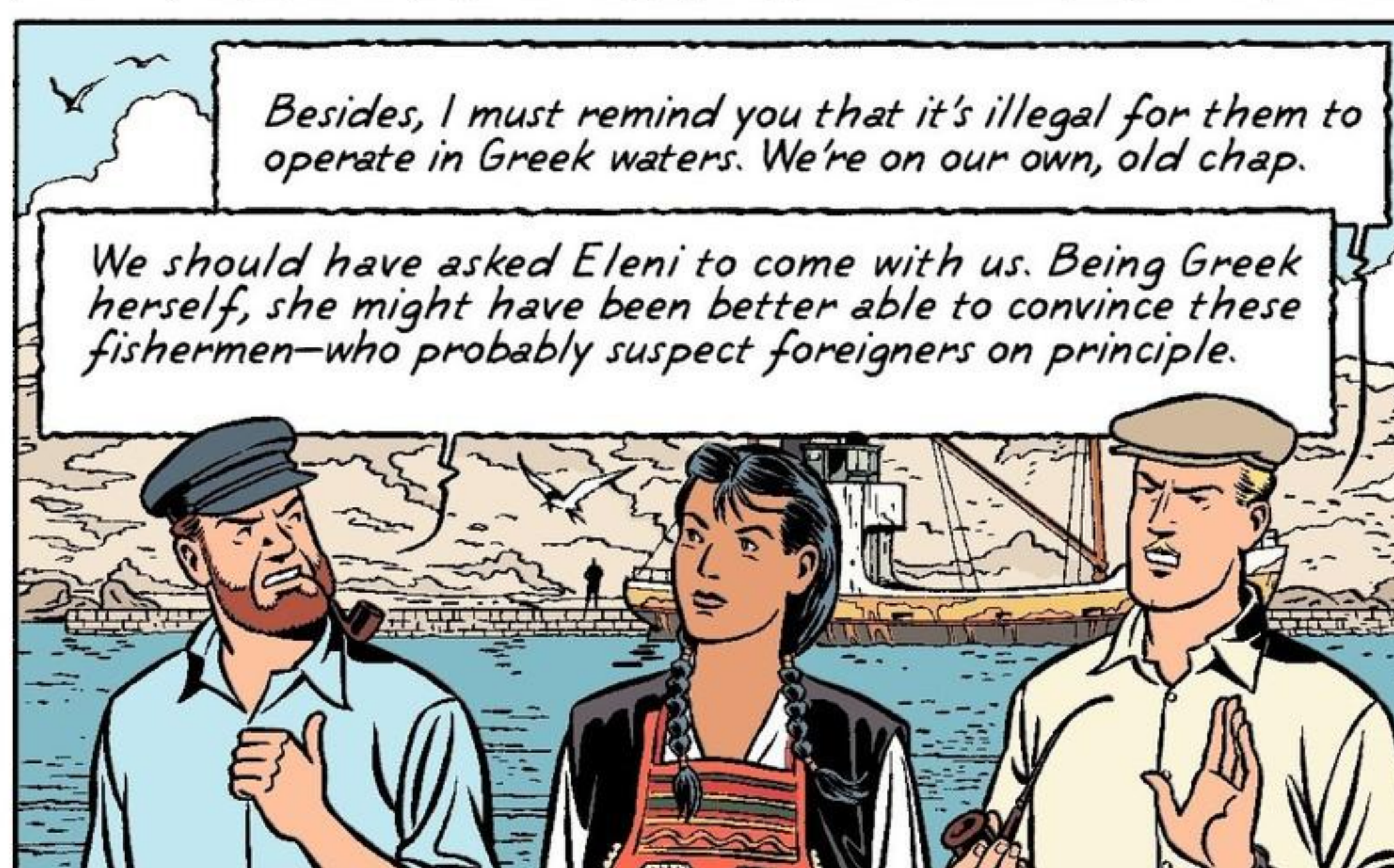
My knowledge of classical Greek isn't the best for speaking to these people, but it's enough that I got the gist of it: None of them agreed to take us to Crete.

Blast. That's inconvenient. We can hardly afford to be stuck here.



There's a cargo ship that comes from Crete twice a month to resupply the island, but the next one won't be here for another 10 days. I suppose you could ask M16 to send us their seaplane.

I've already tried twice to reach our station in Athens, but no luck. The call won't go through.



Besides, I must remind you that it's illegal for them to operate in Greek waters. We're on our own, old chap.

We should have asked Eleni to come with us. Being Greek herself, she might have been better able to convince these fishermen—who probably suspect foreigners on principle.



The poor girl is still upset about everything she's been through. She didn't sleep well last night and preferred to stay in our room to rest.



I understand the problem, Francis. But, for heaven's sake, we have to find a way to leave this island!



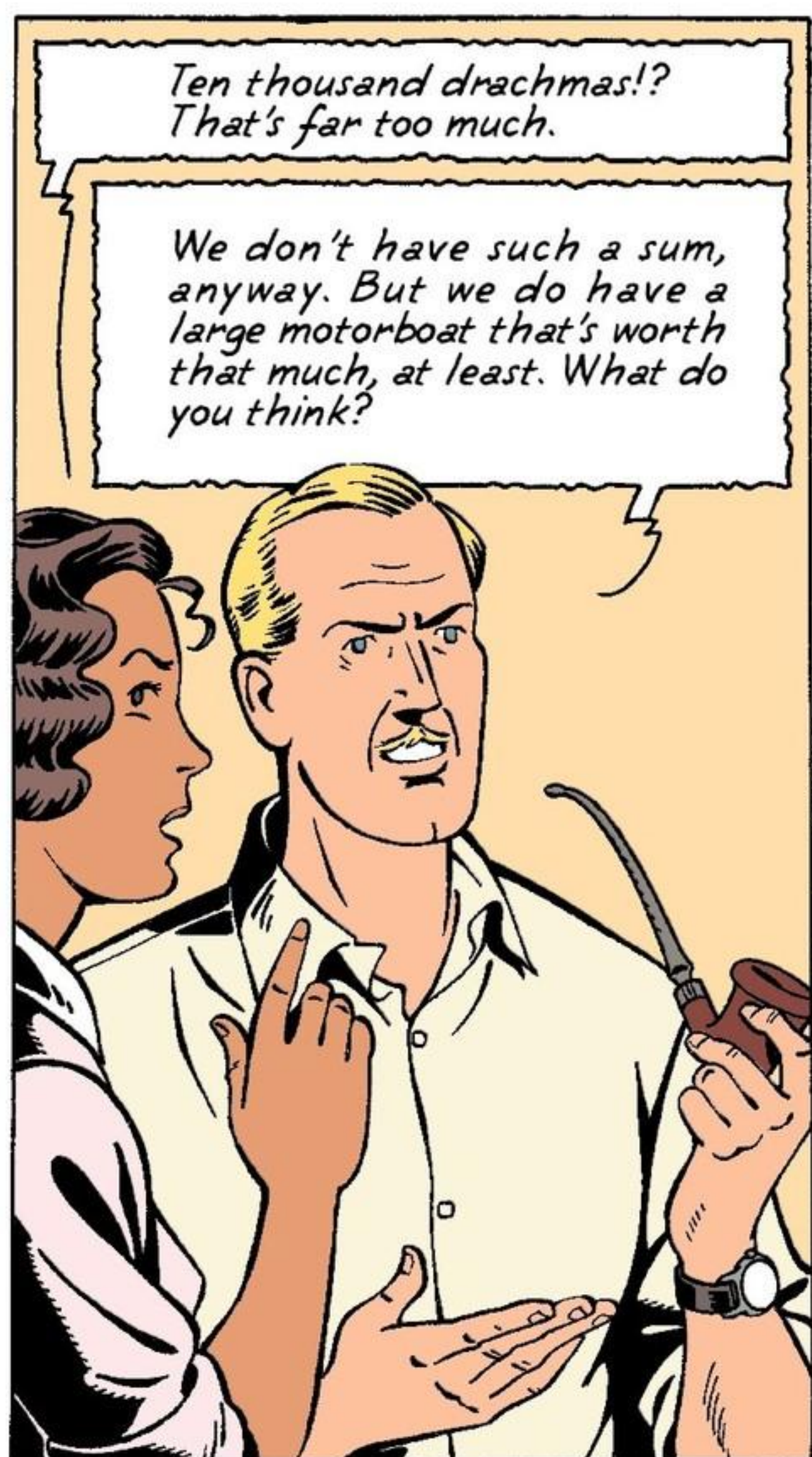
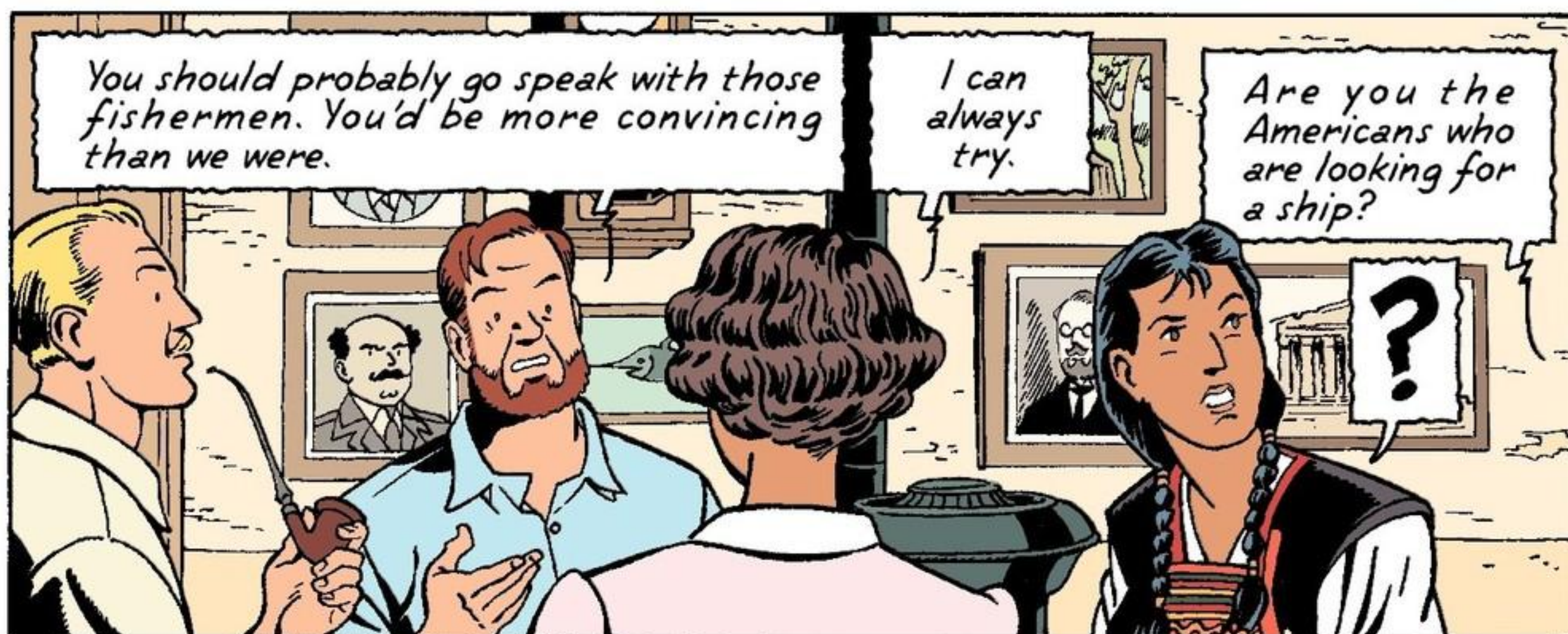
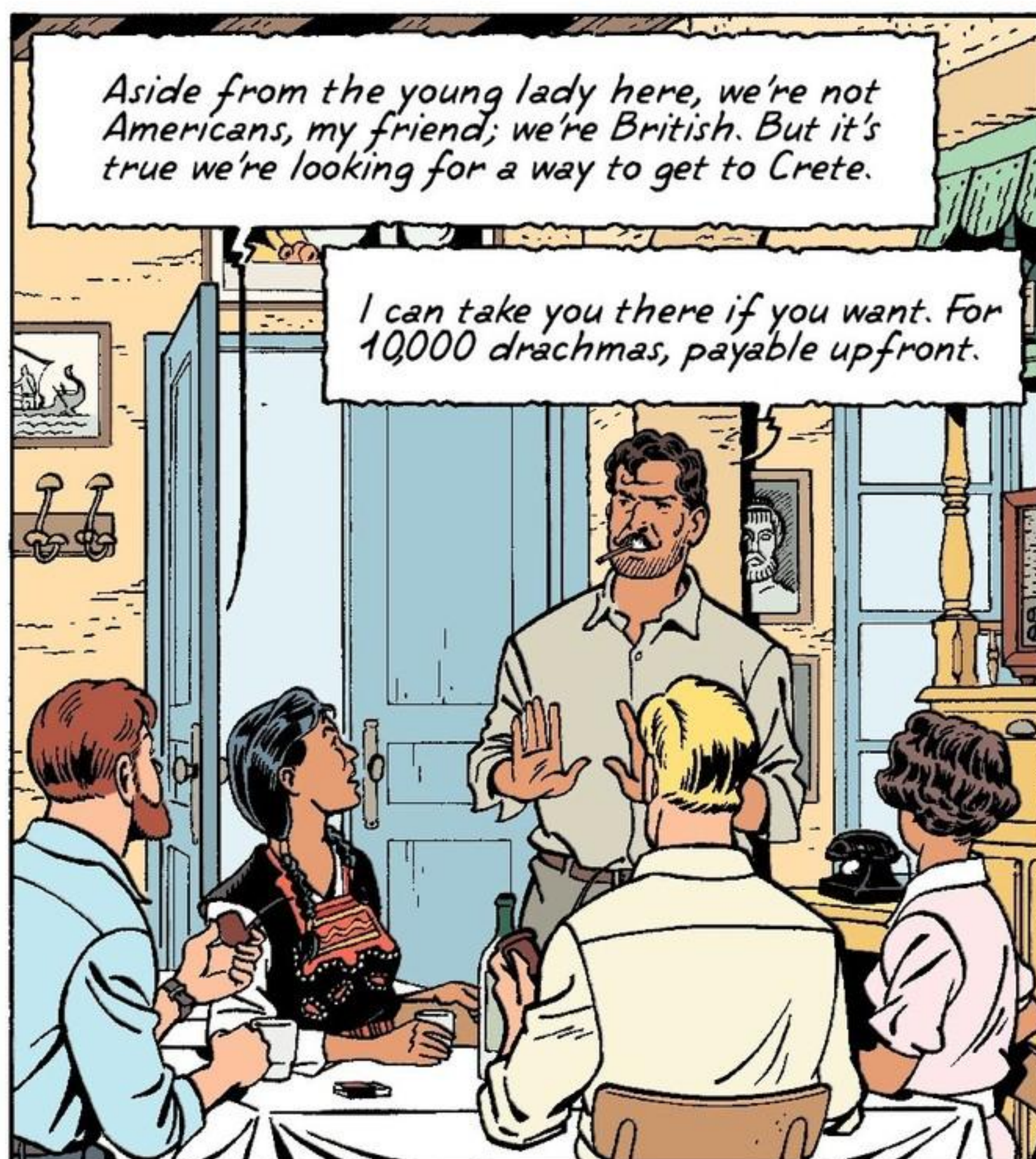
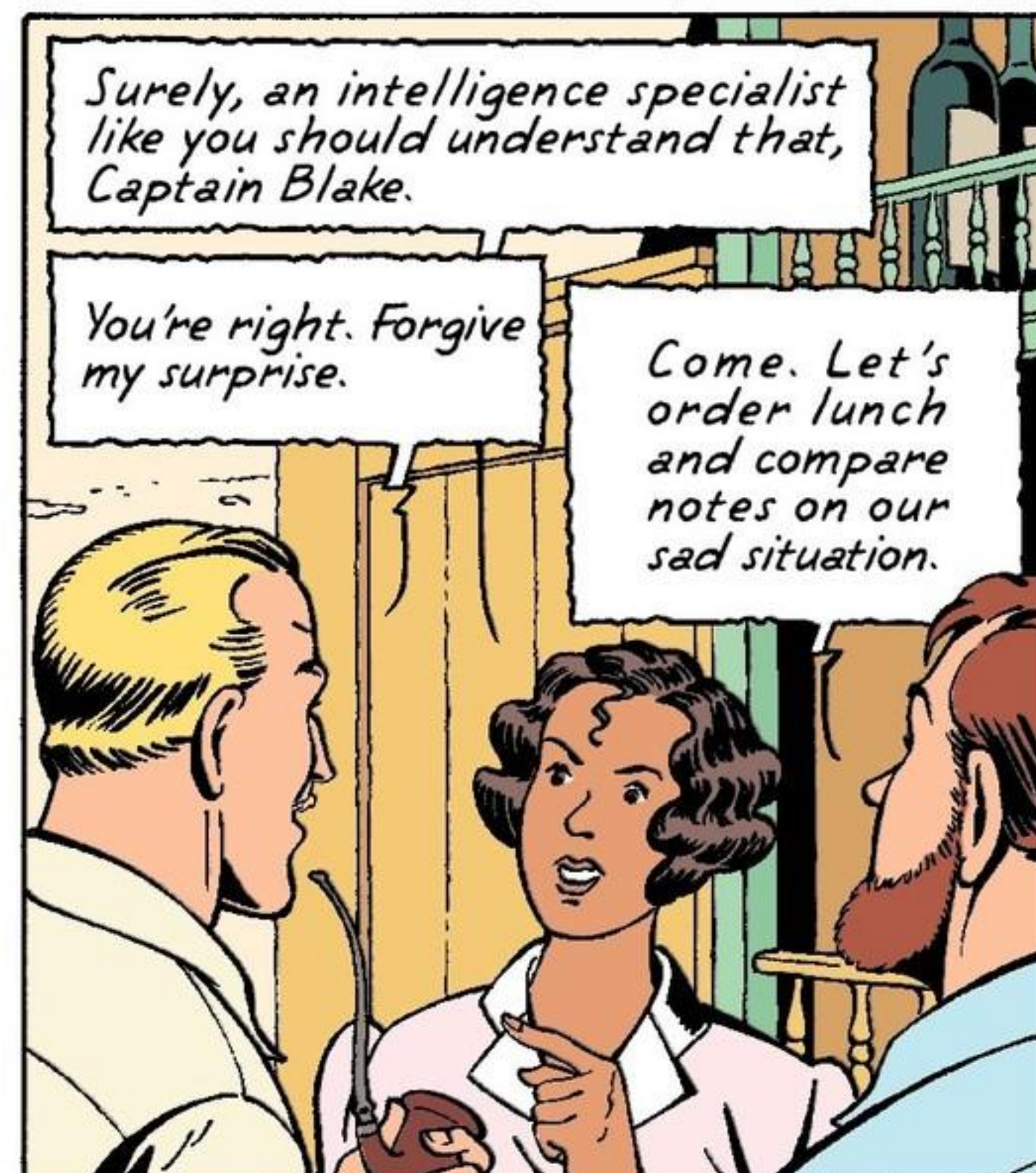
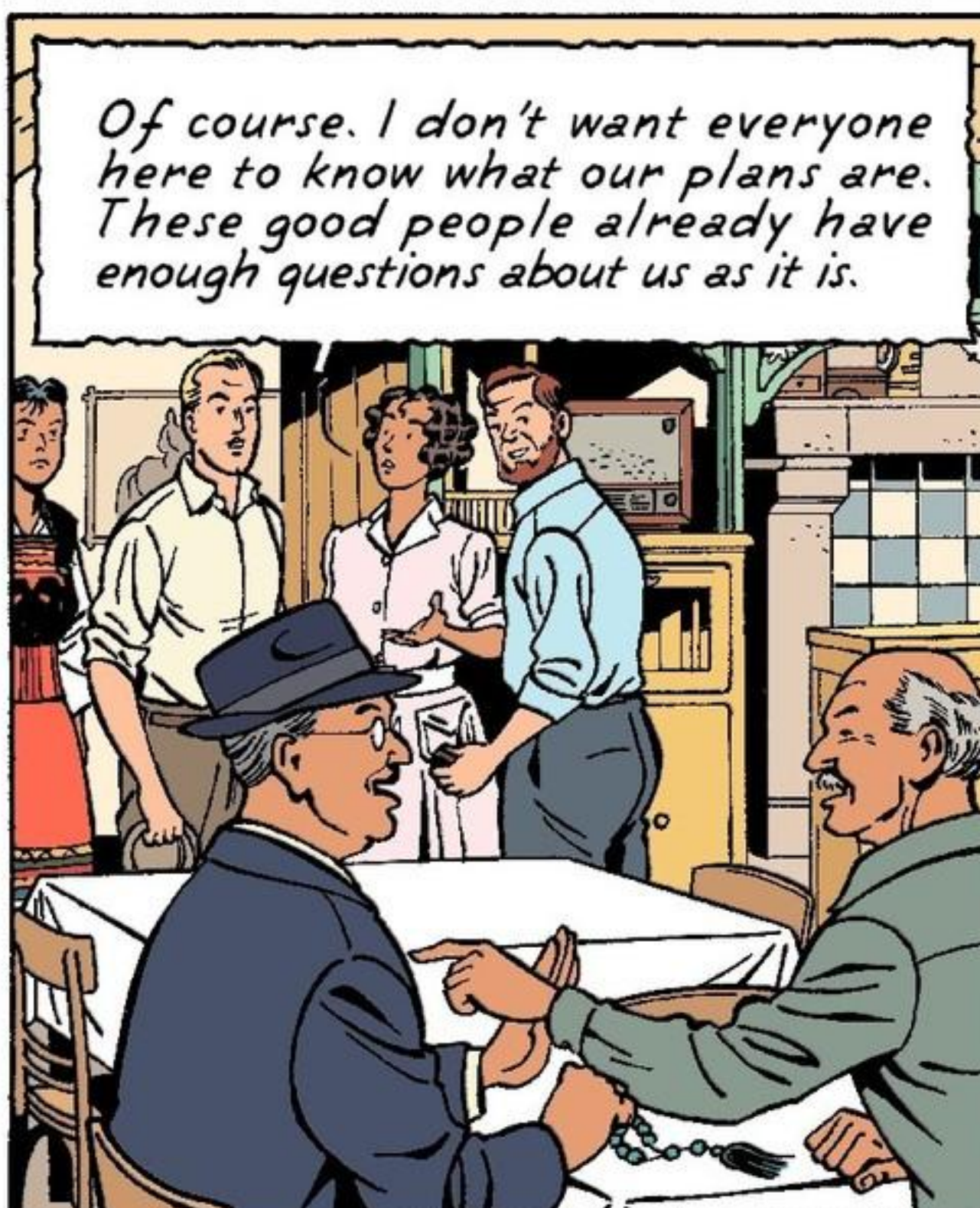
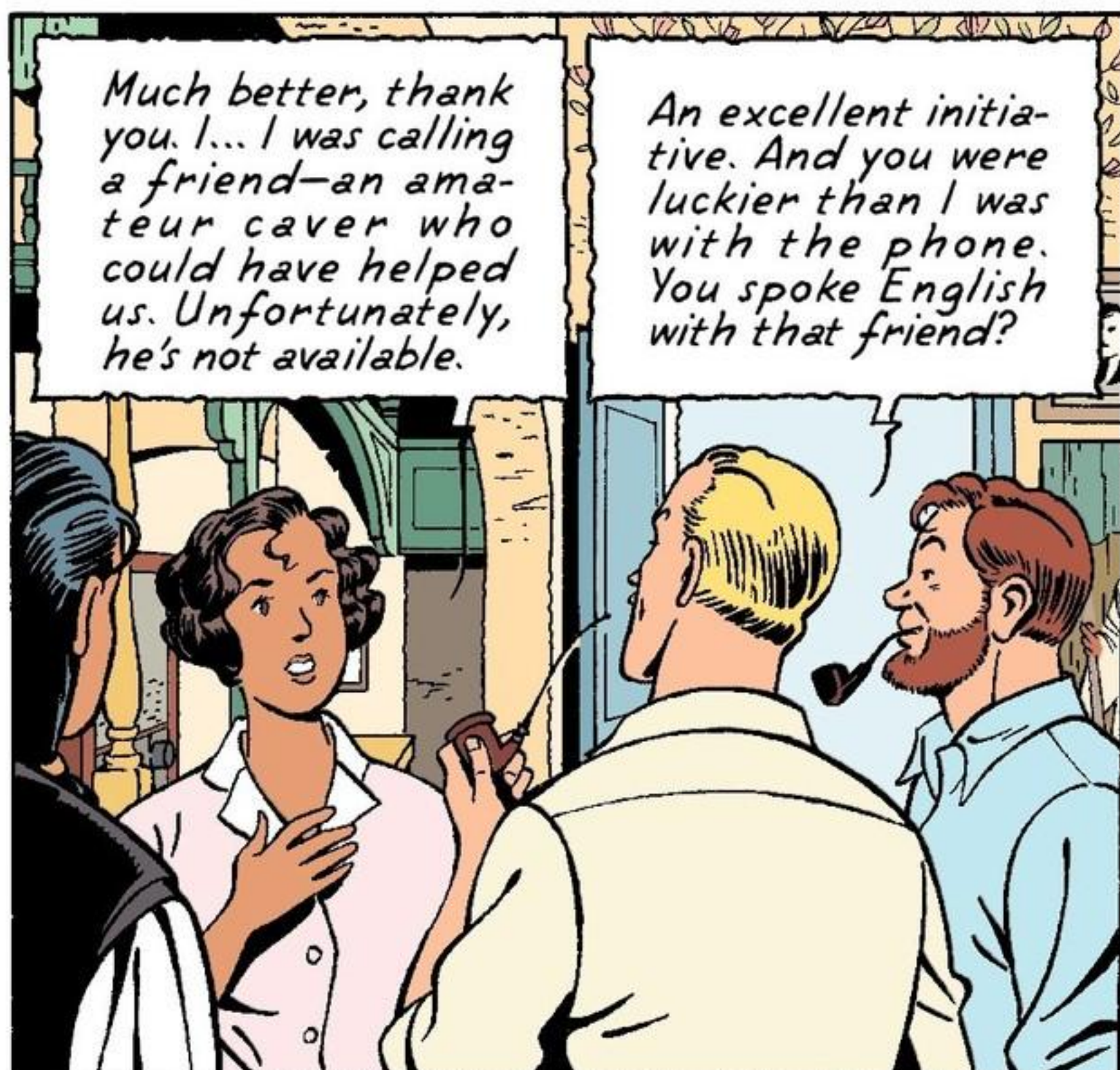
We're bound to find someone who will...

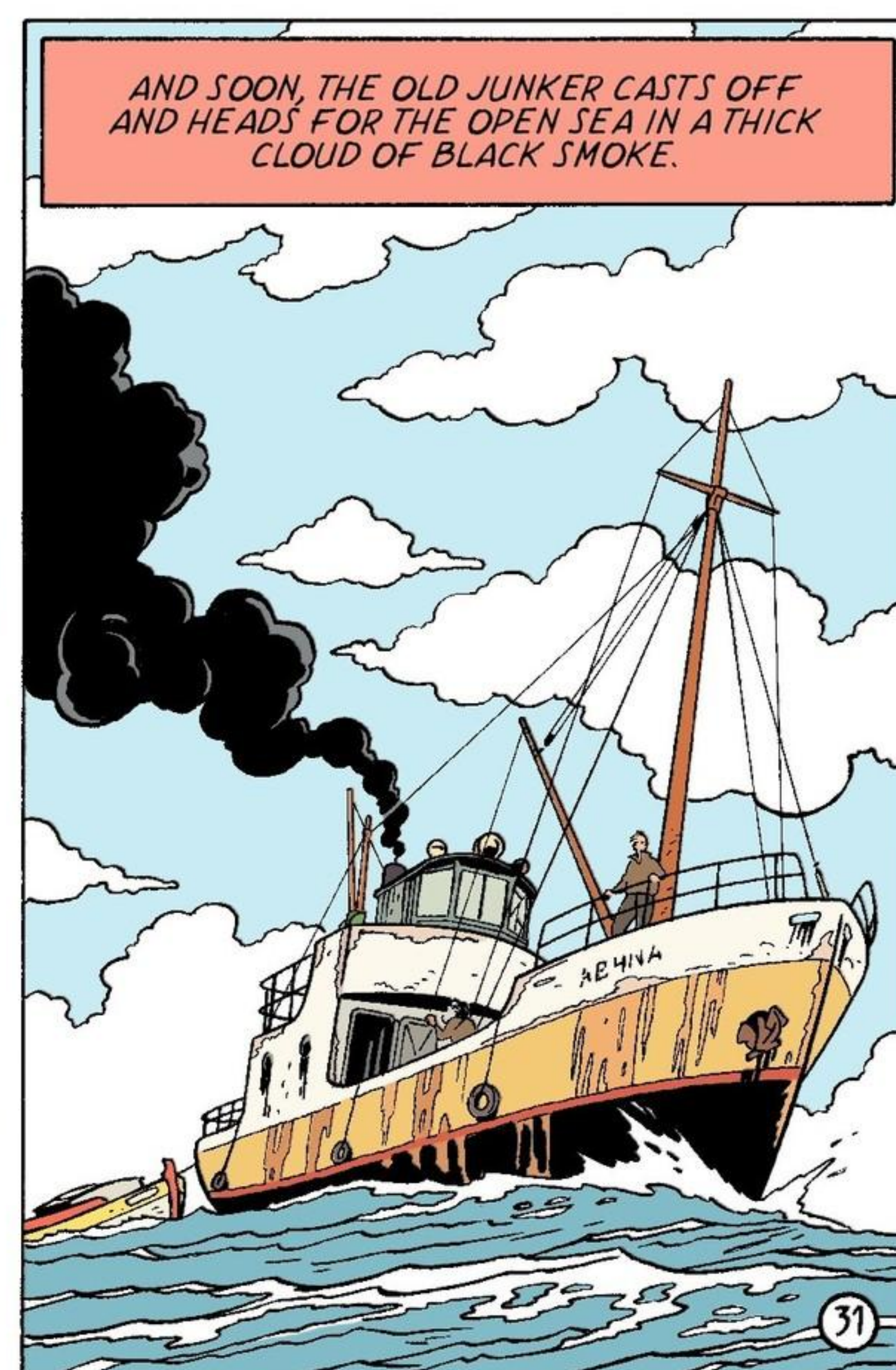
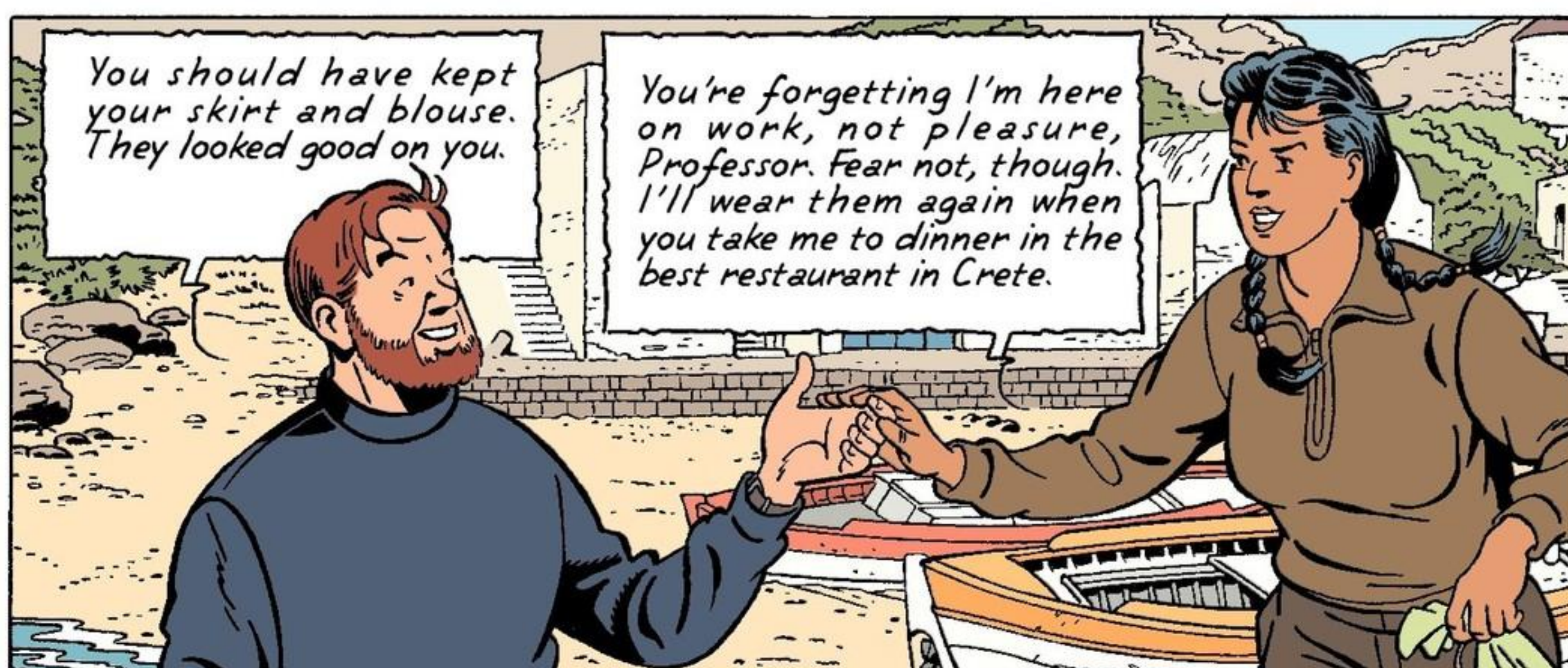
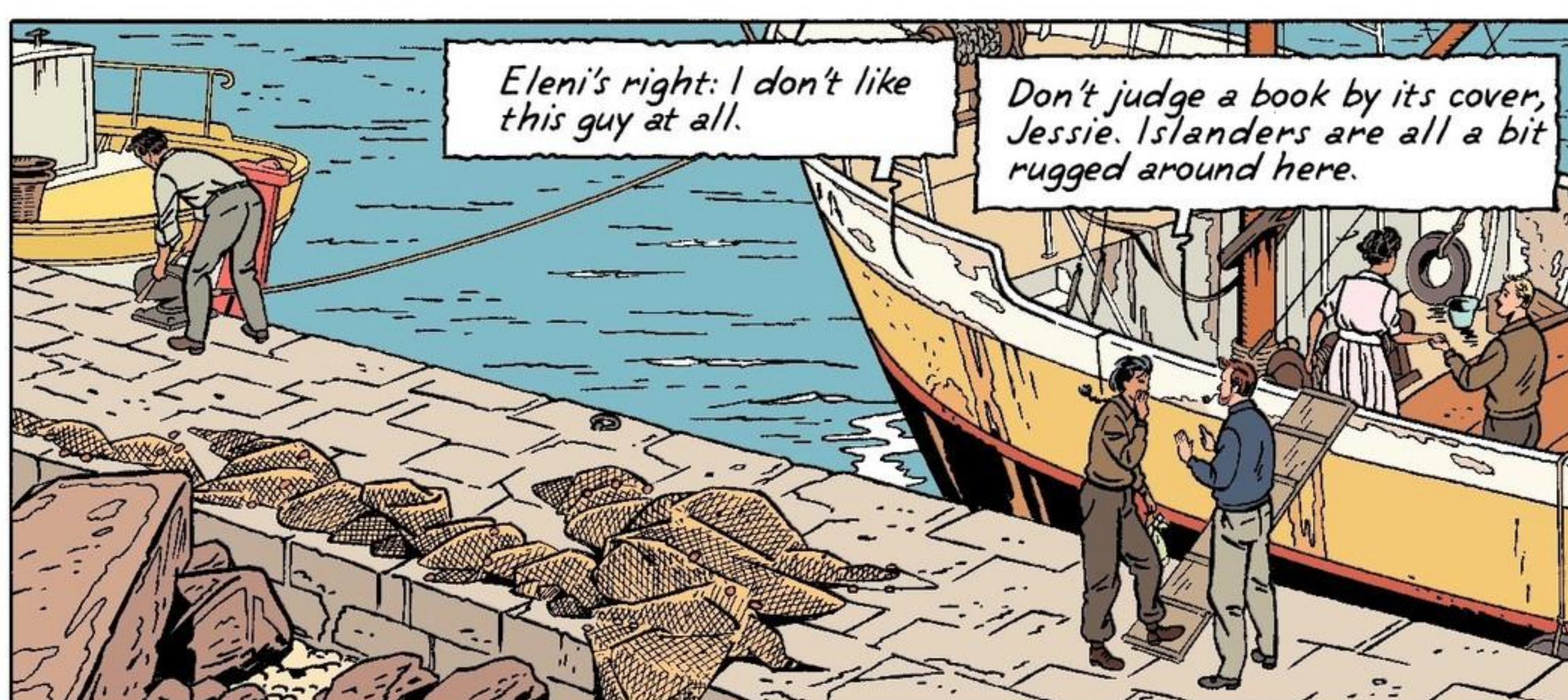
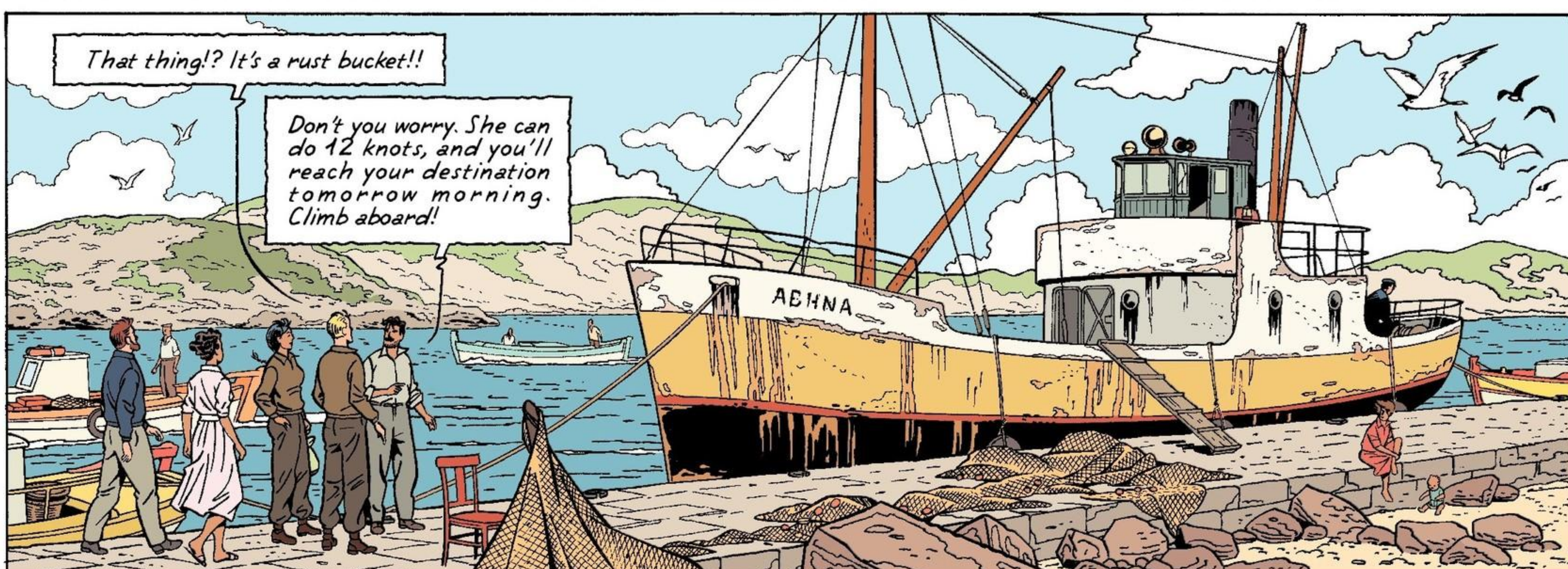
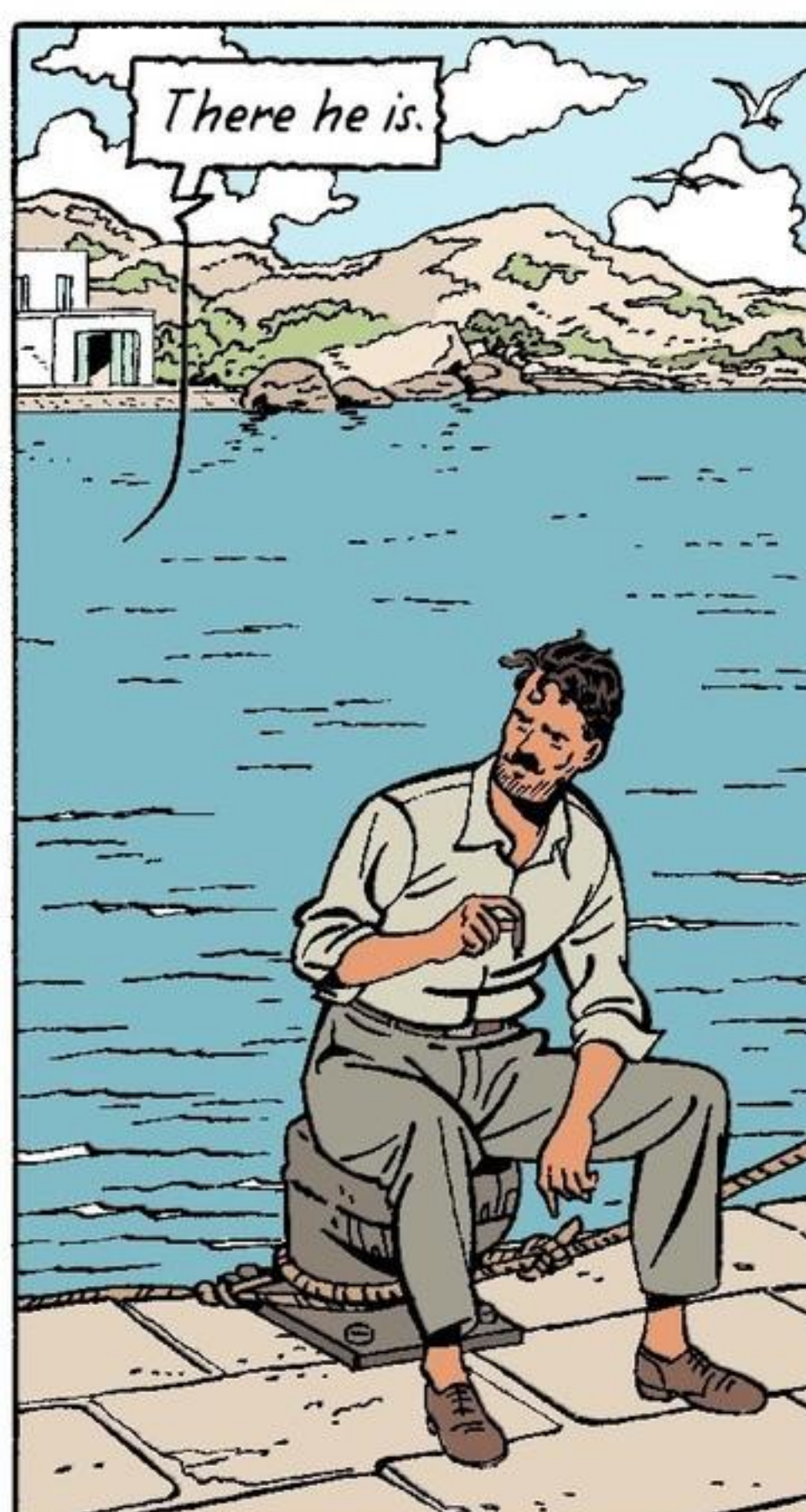
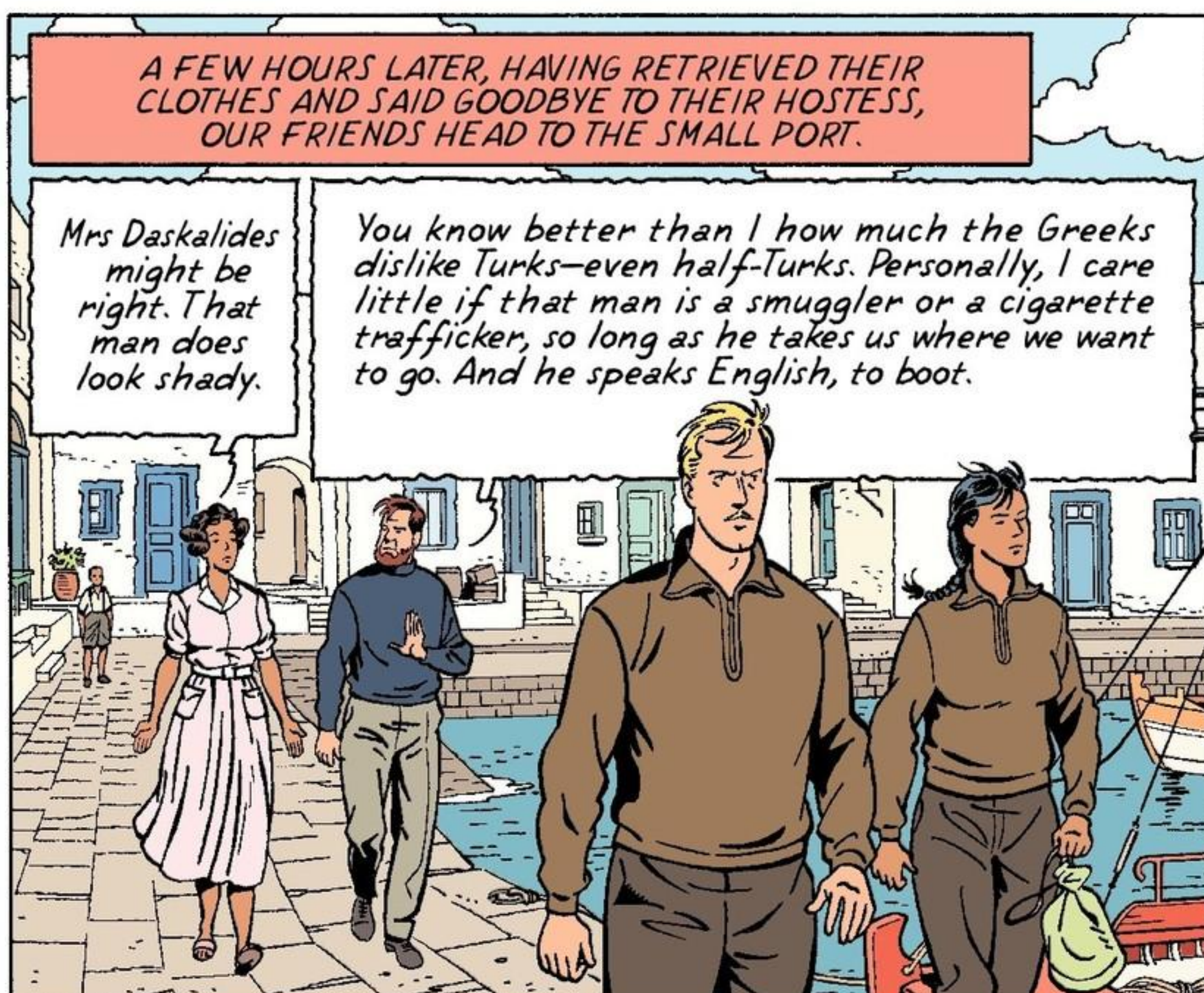
Shhh...

If we manage to leave Syrenios, we should be on location in four or five days... Yes, I know...



Hello, Eleni! I'm glad to see you're feeling better.

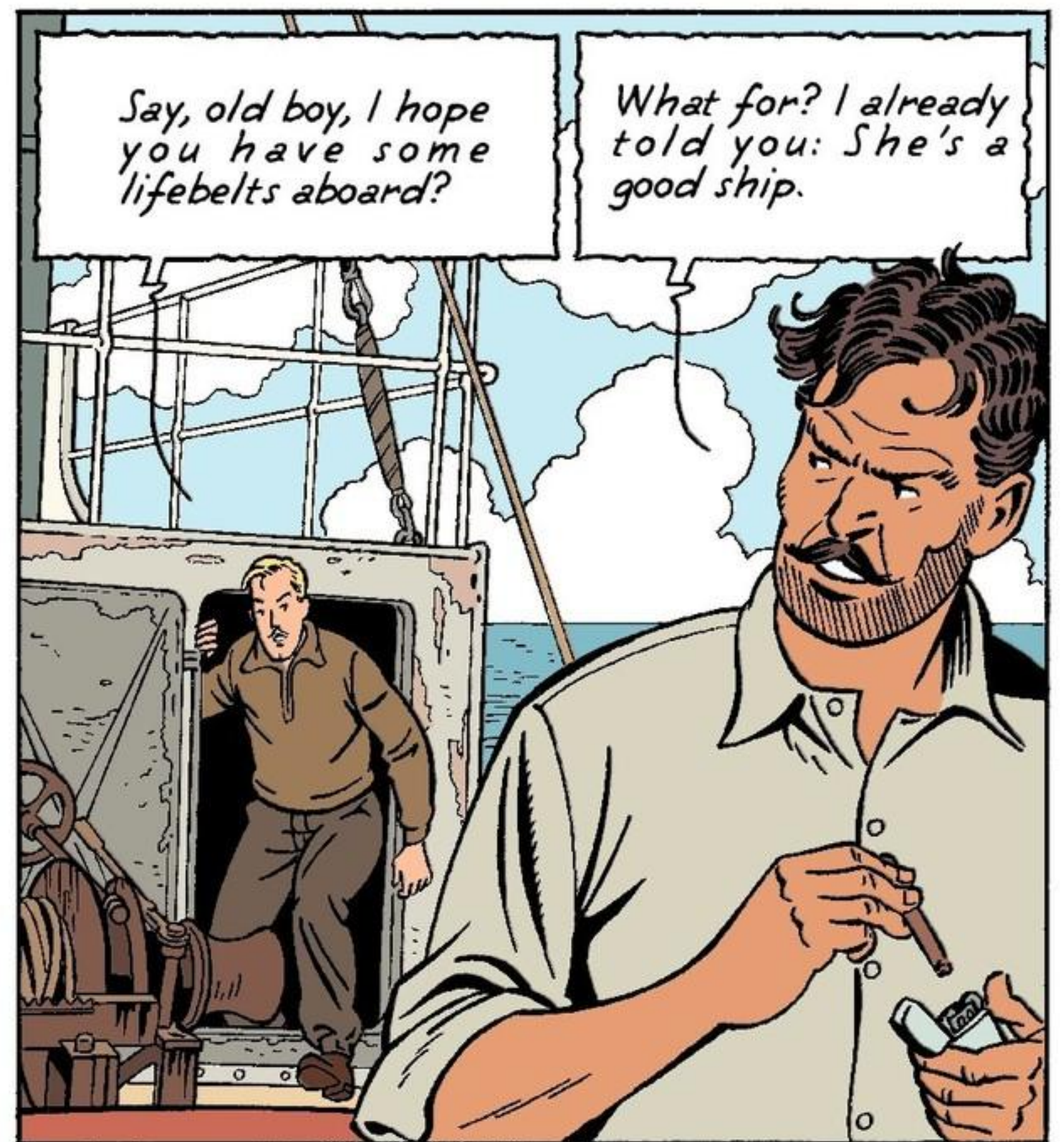






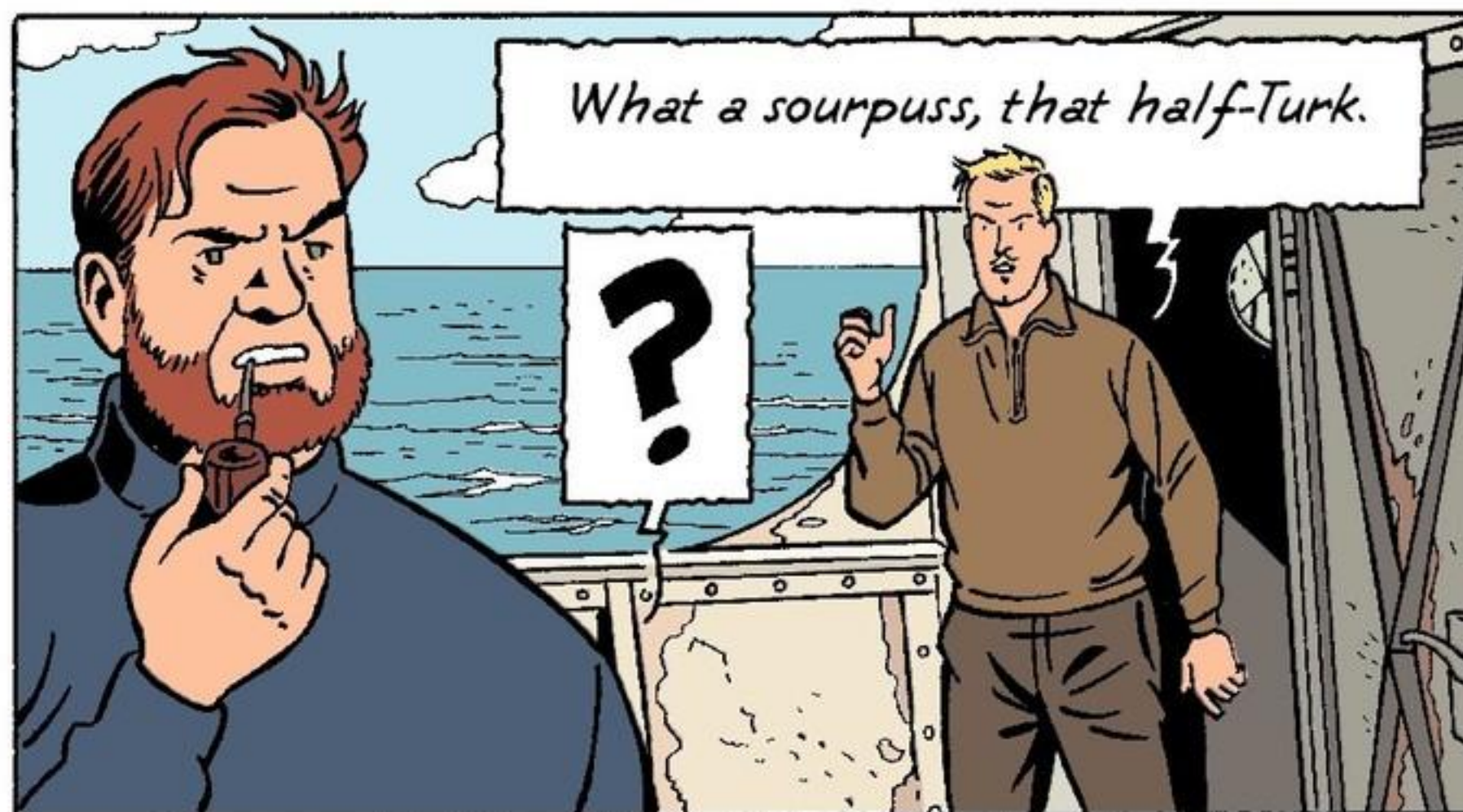
This cockleshell isn't as comfortable as our old friend von Stahl's yacht, but at least we're safe here.

Not safe from sinking, though. This tub looks like it's about to go for a Burton.



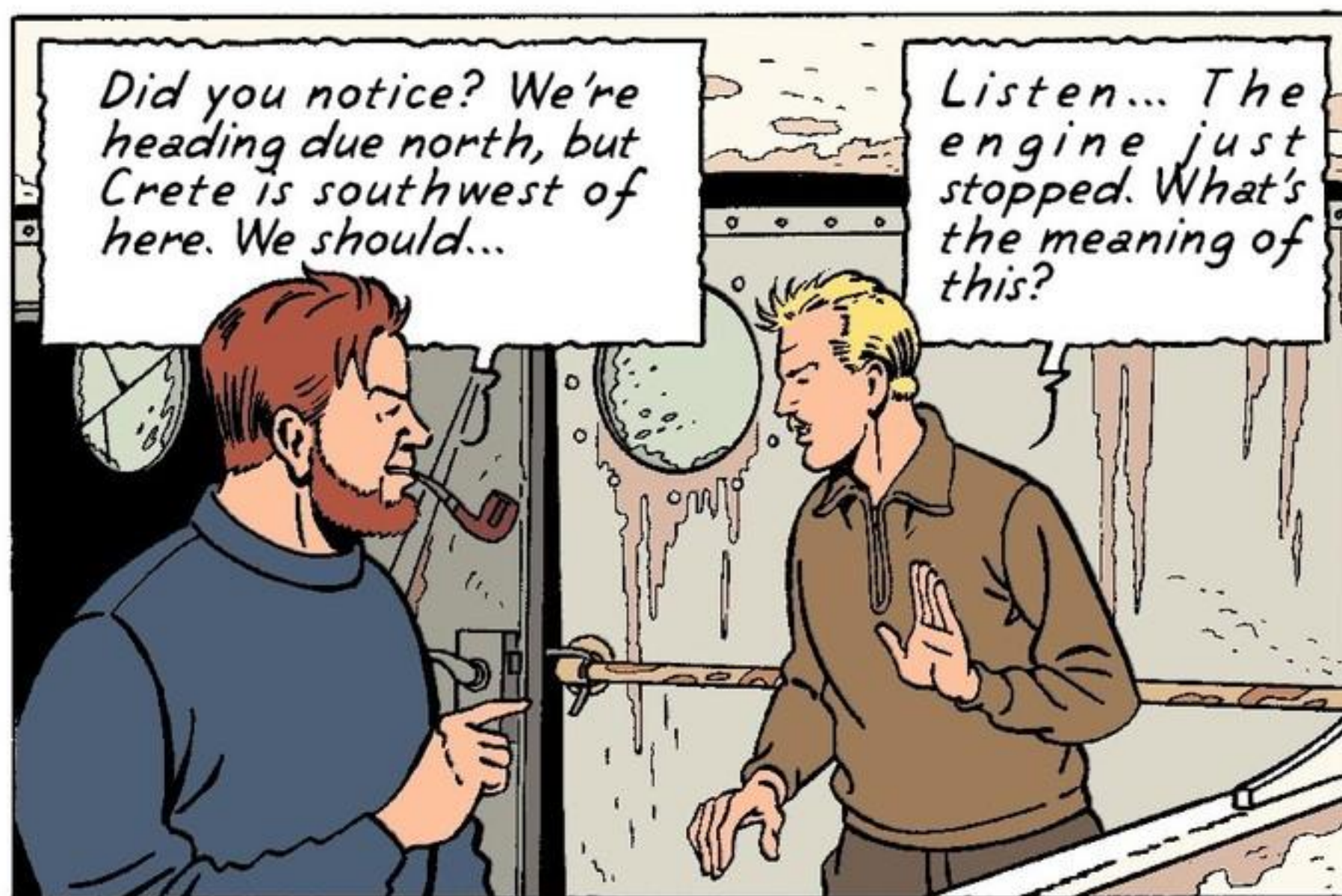
Say, old boy, I hope you have some lifebelts aboard?

What for? I already told you: She's a good ship.



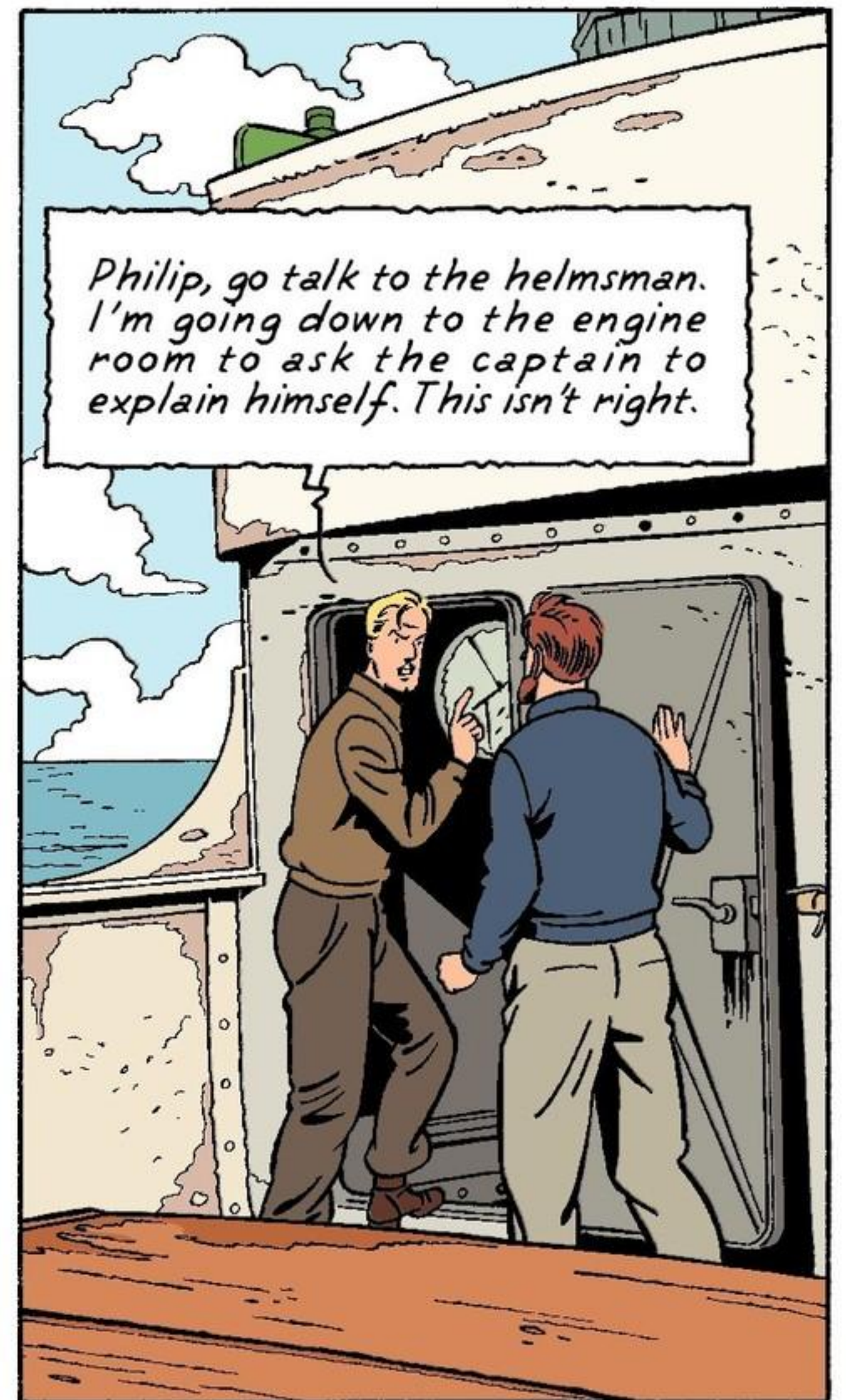
What a sourpuss, that half-Turk.

?



Did you notice? We're heading due north, but Crete is southwest of here. We should...

Listen... The engine just stopped. What's the meaning of this?



Philip, go talk to the helmsman. I'm going down to the engine room to ask the captain to explain himself. This isn't right.



WORRIED, MORTIMER OBEYS BLAKE AND BOUNDS UP THE SHORT LADDER LEADING TO THE WHEELHOUSE.

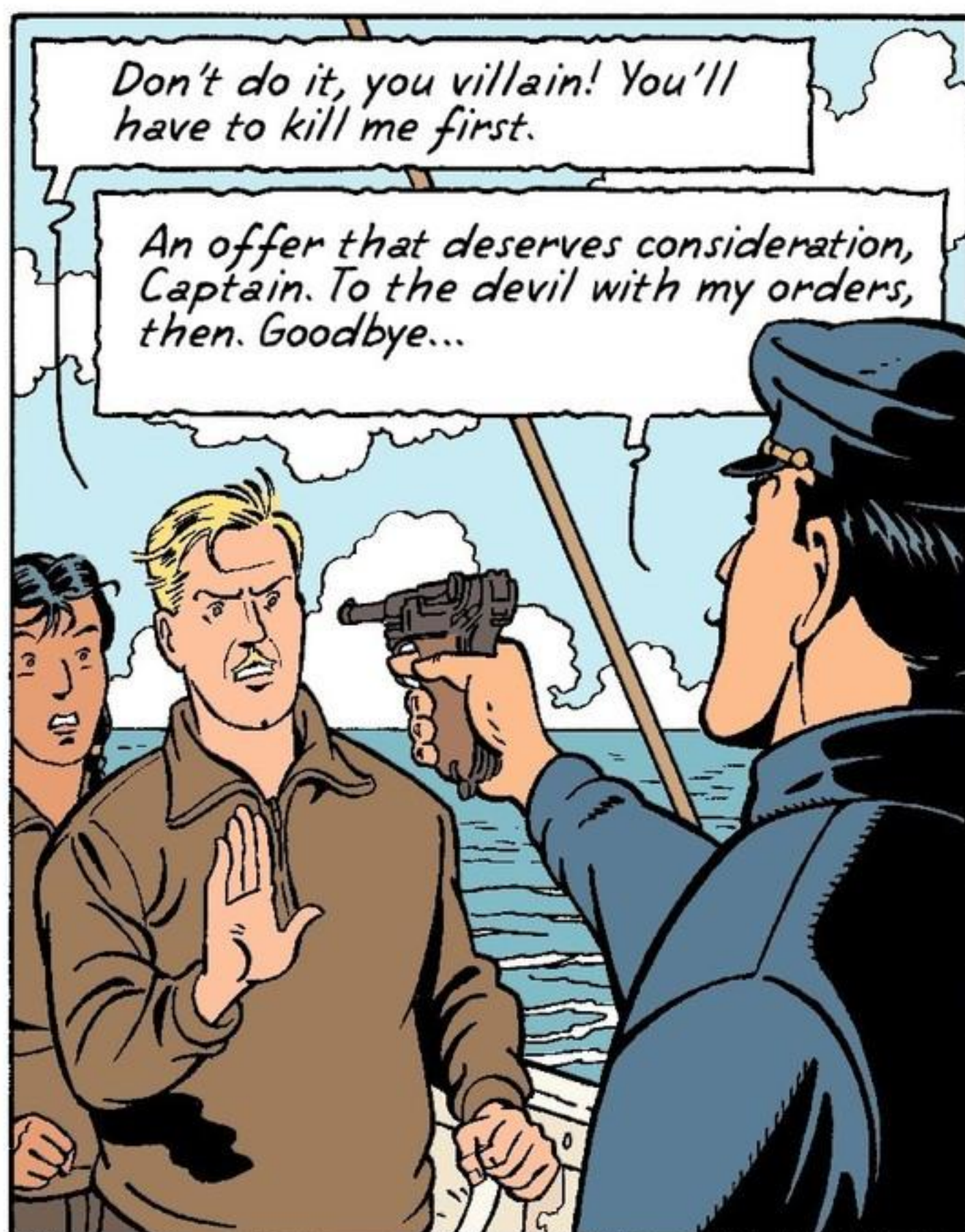
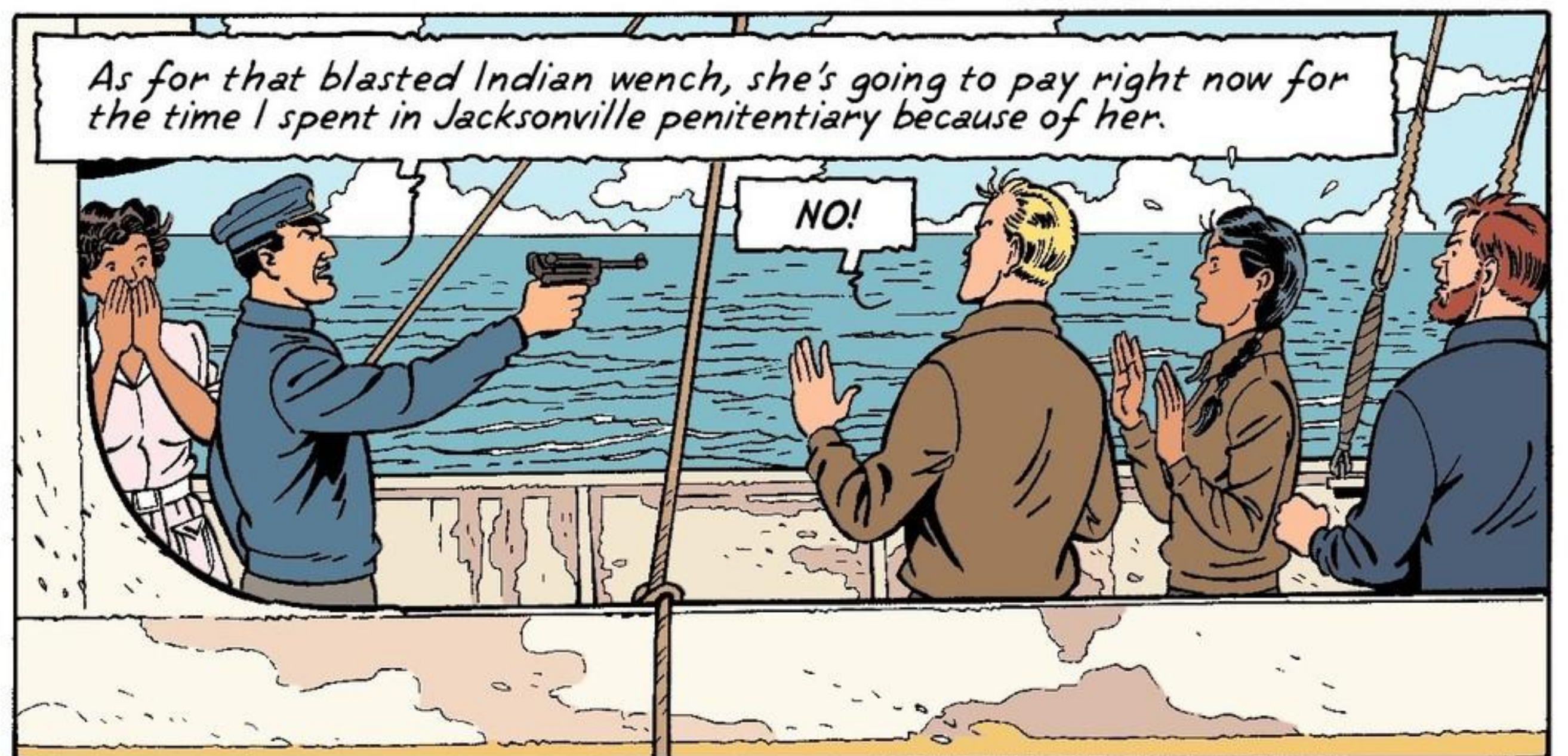
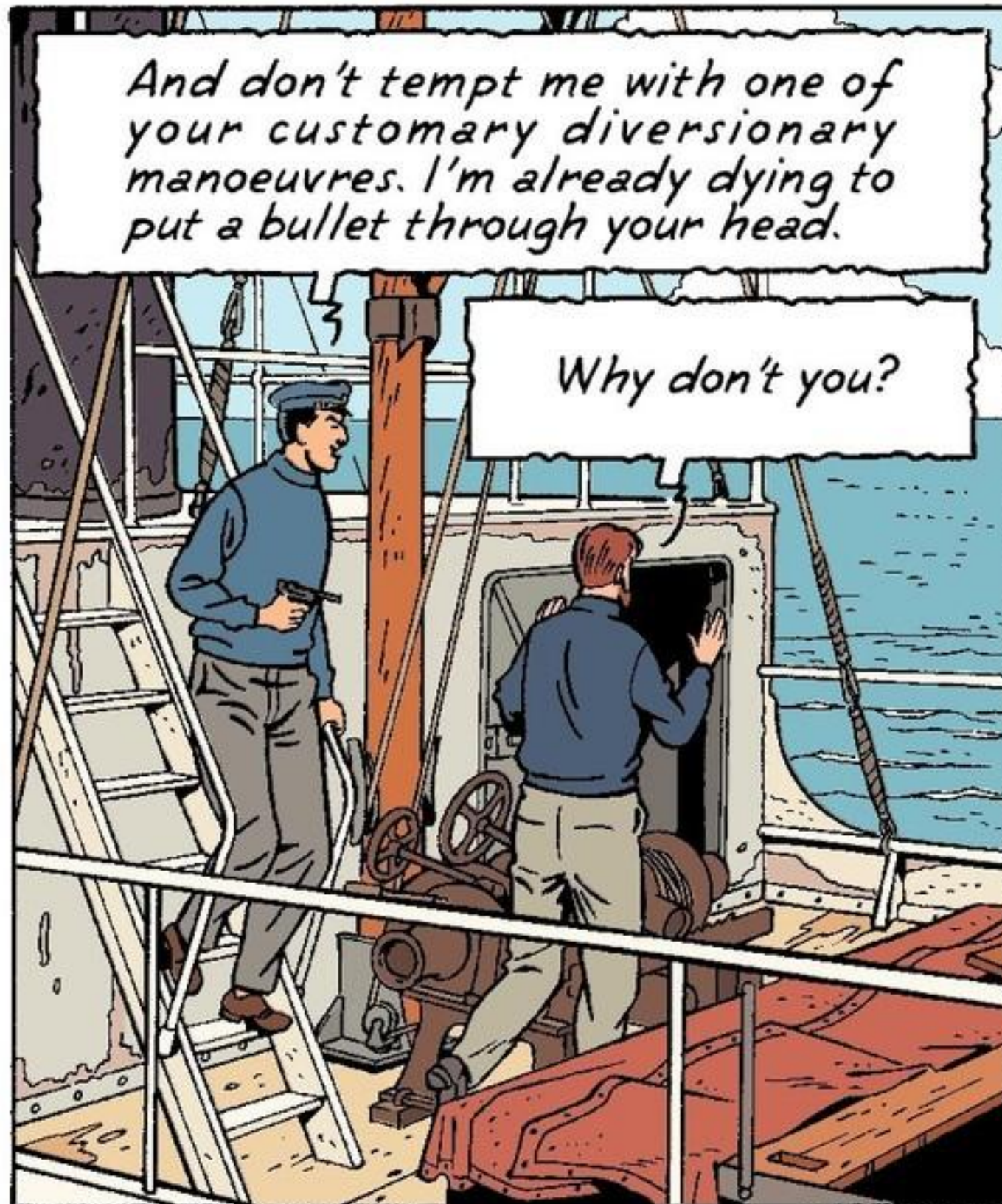


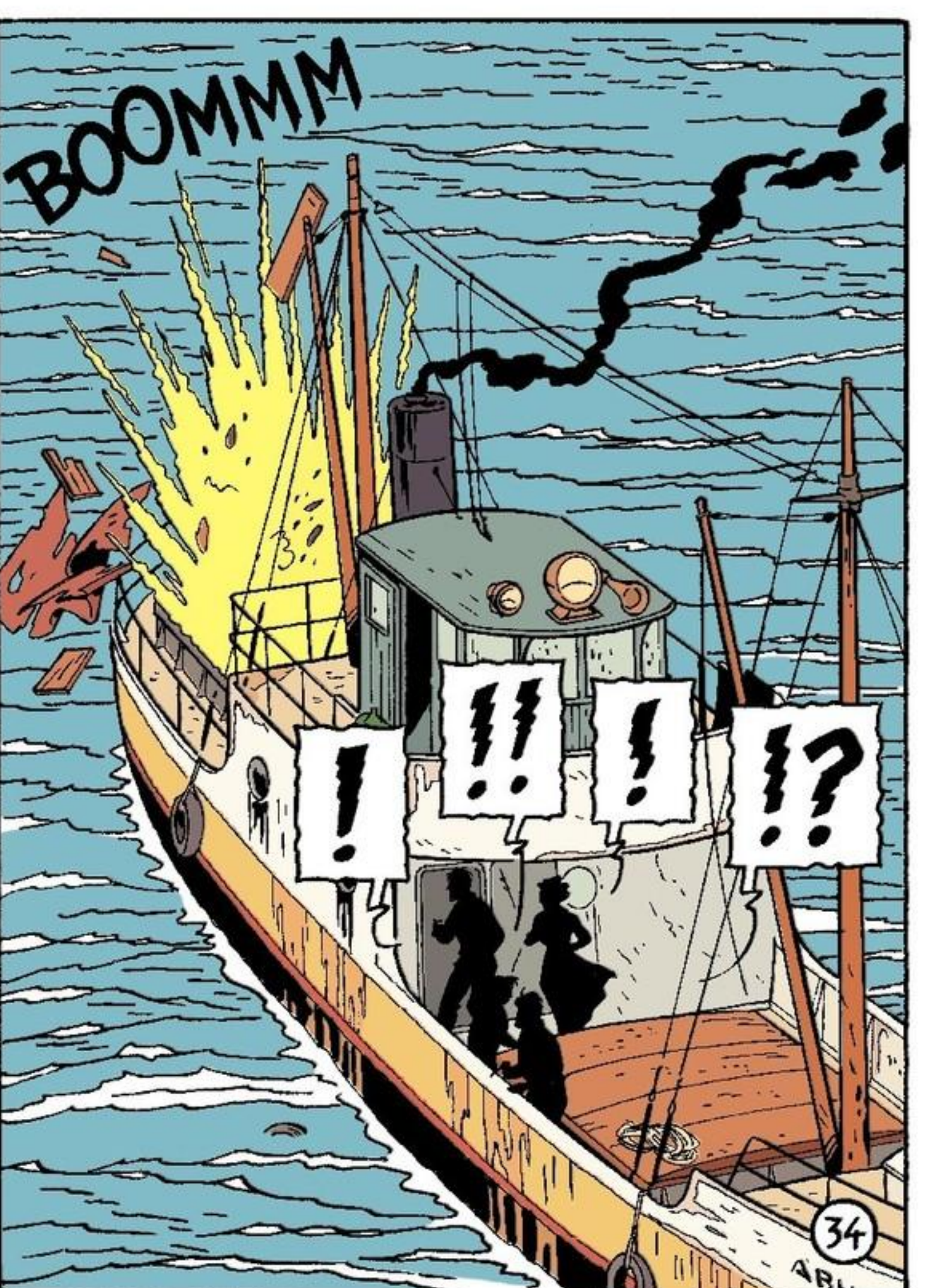
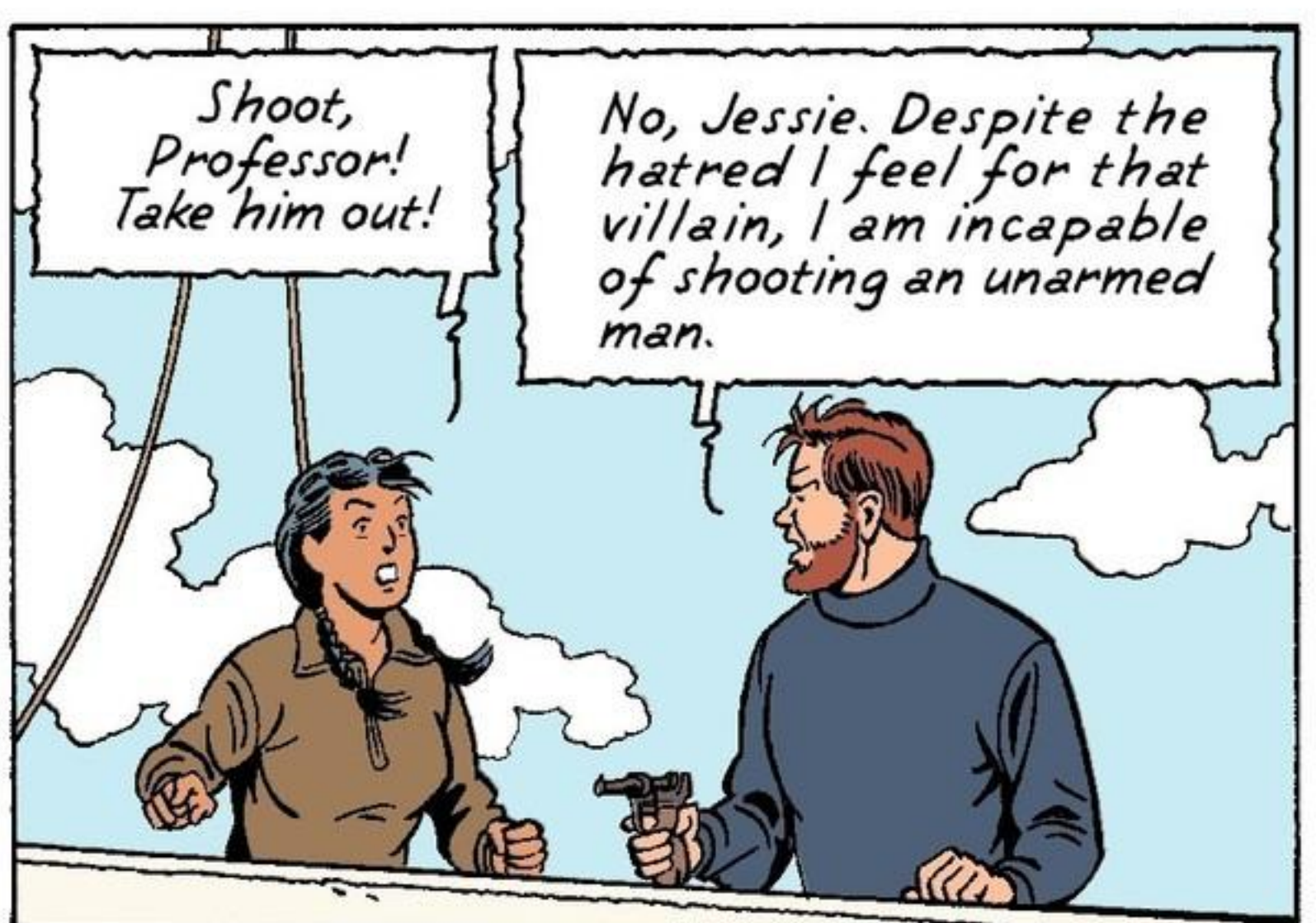
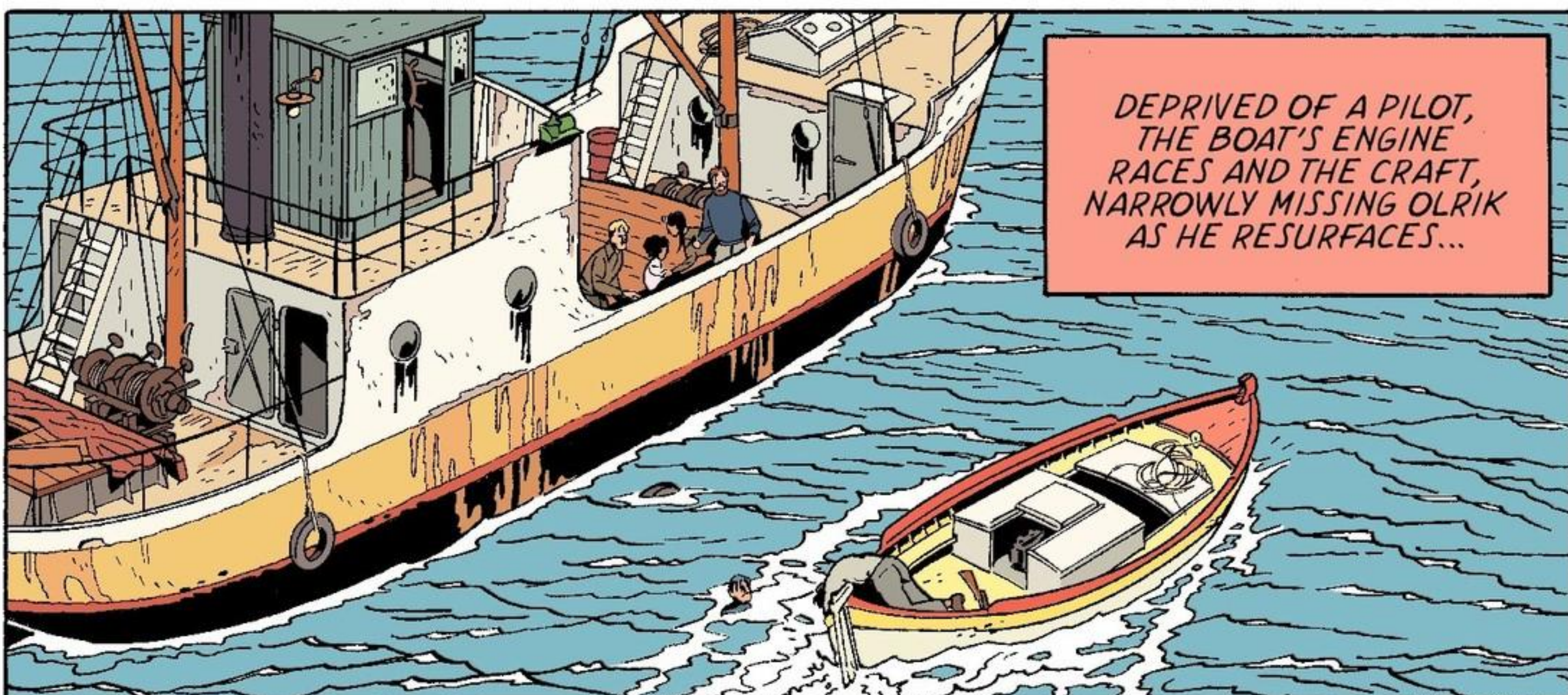
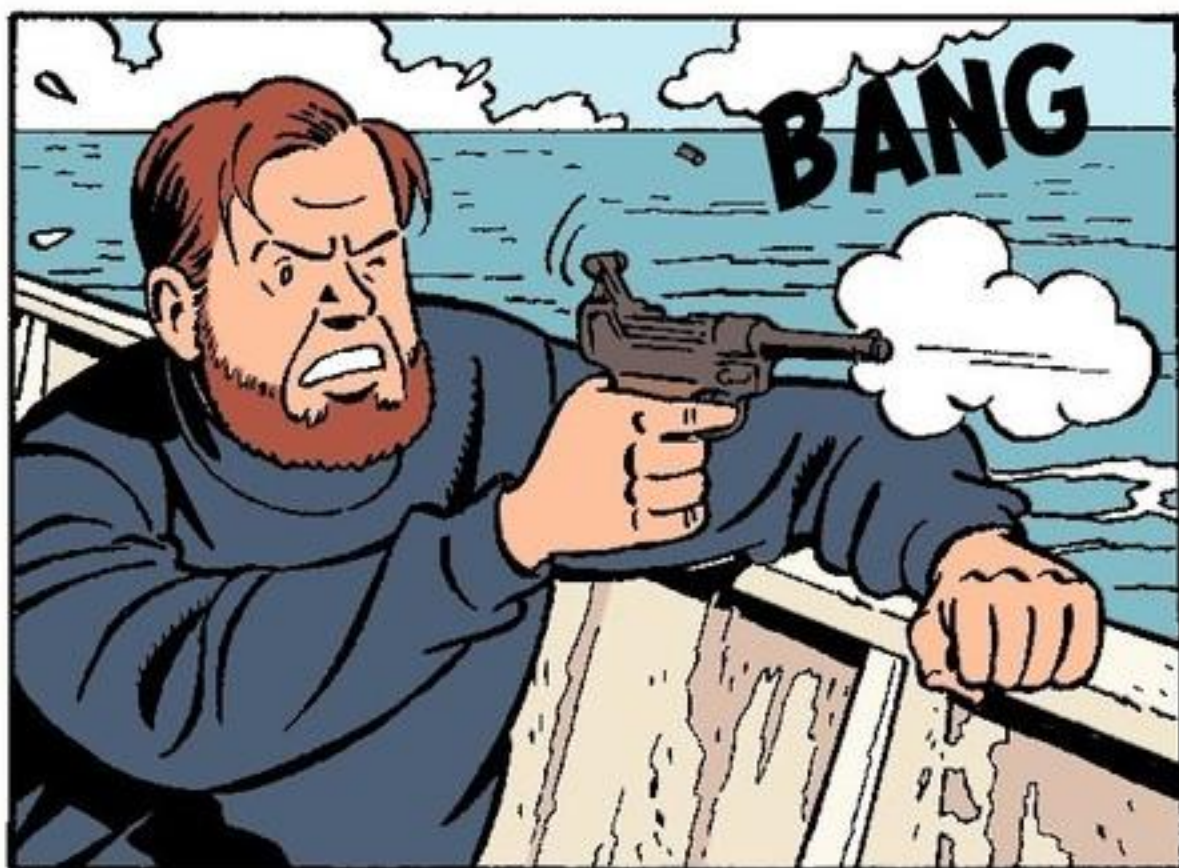
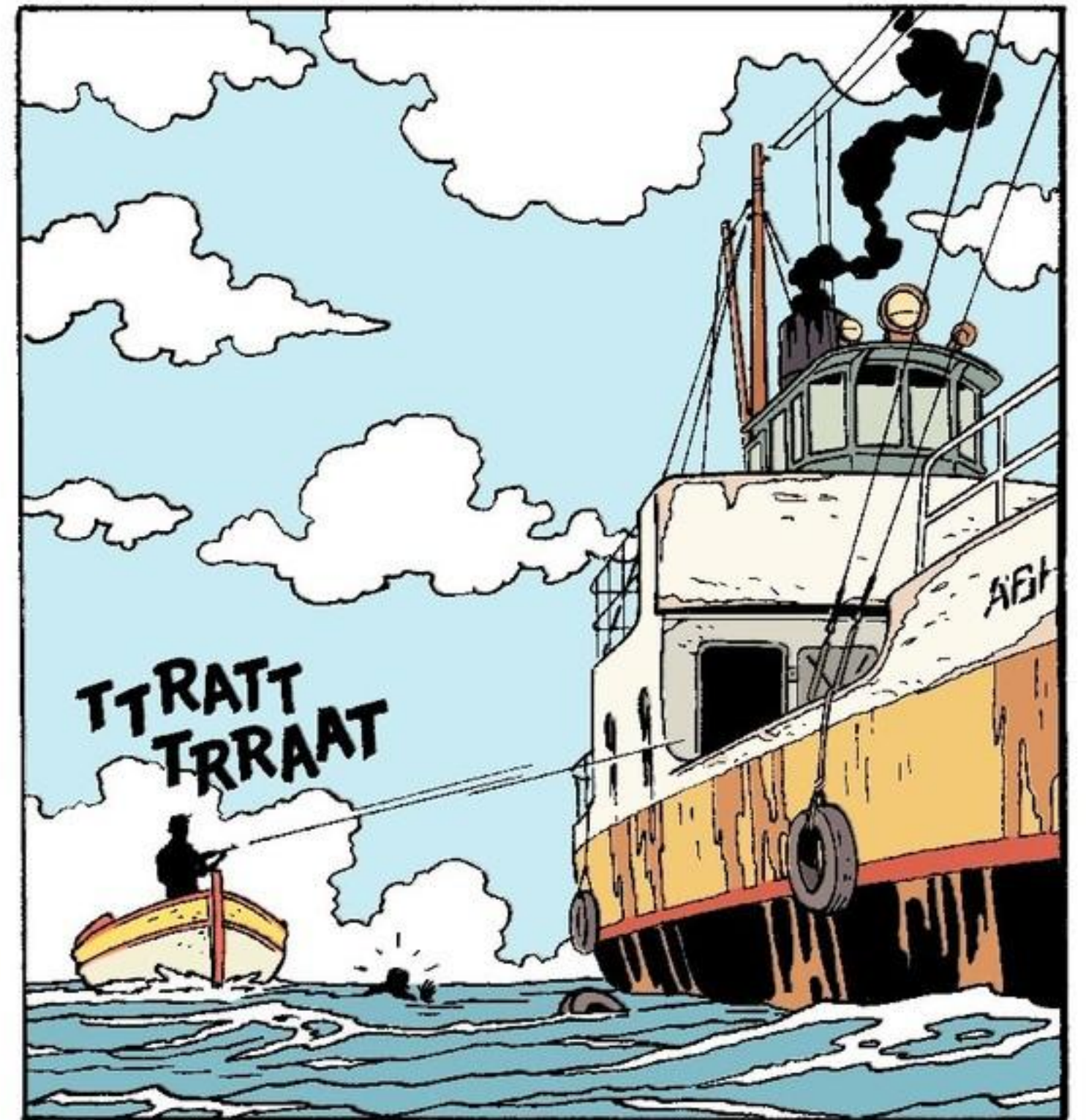
Tell me, my good man, why are we sailing due north, exactly?



Because you will never reach Crete, Professor Mortimer. Or any other destination, for that matter.

The devil!! Olrik!!







It's coming from the hold. Stay here; I'll go see what happened.



BUT THE SIGHT THAT GREET'S BLAKE IN THE SMALL ENGINE ROOM DRAWS AN ANGUISHED CRY FROM HIM.

Good heavens!!



The scoundrels set a dynamite charge. This tub is going to sink in a few minutes.

Blimey!

Good Lord, we're doomed!



WITH A STRENGTH BORN OF DESPERATION, OUR FRIENDS BEGIN WORKING FRANTICALLY AT BUILDING A MAKESHIFT RAFT...

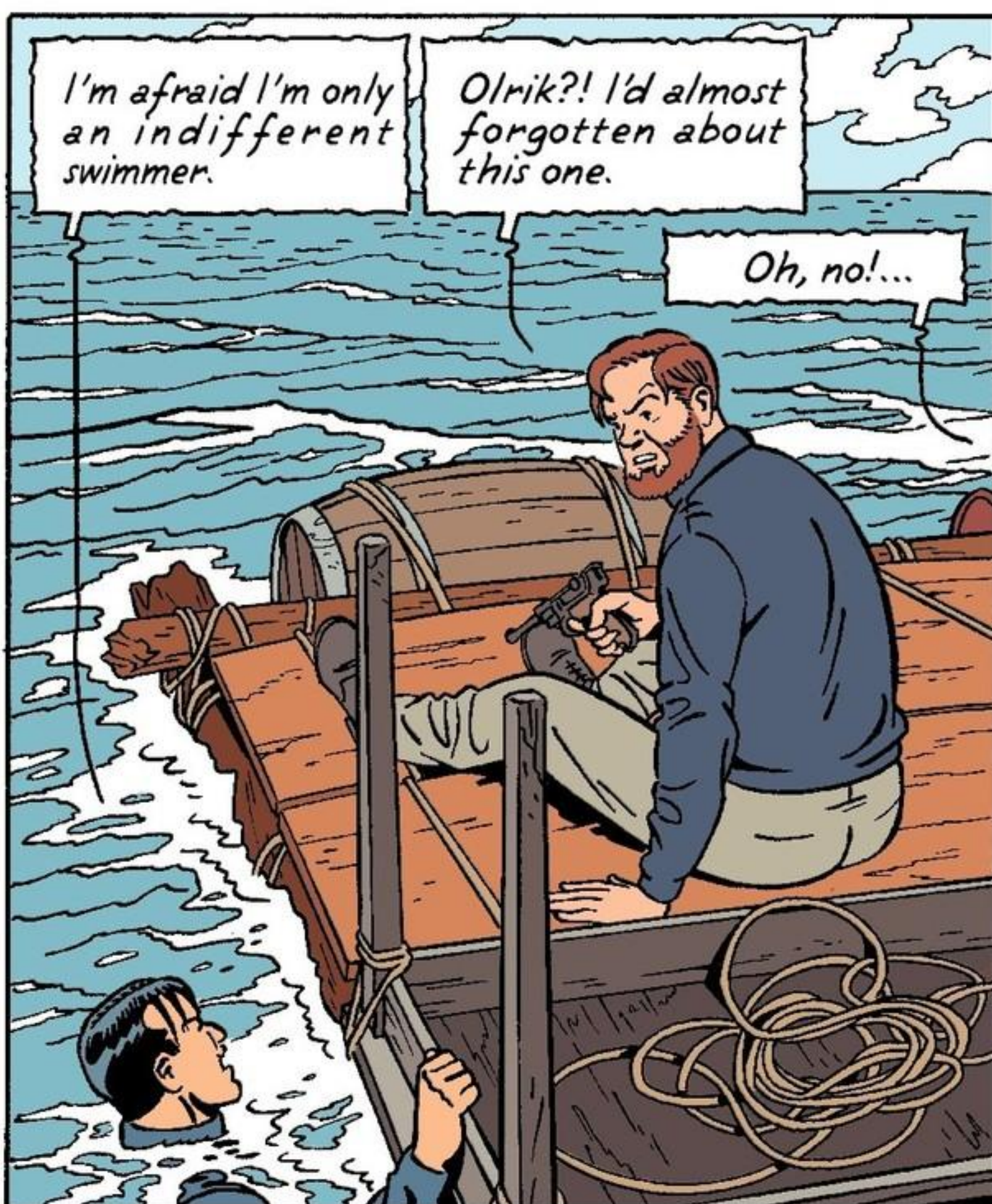
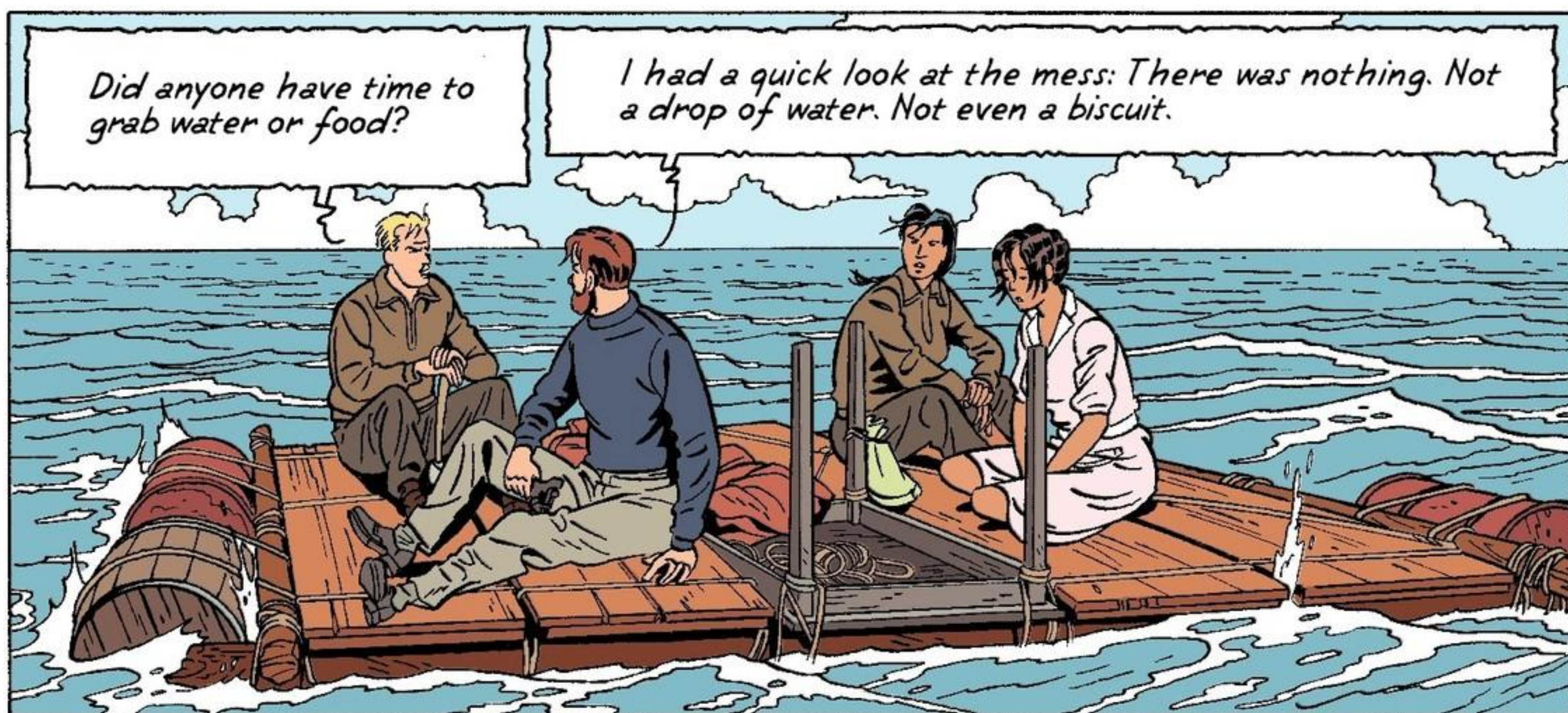
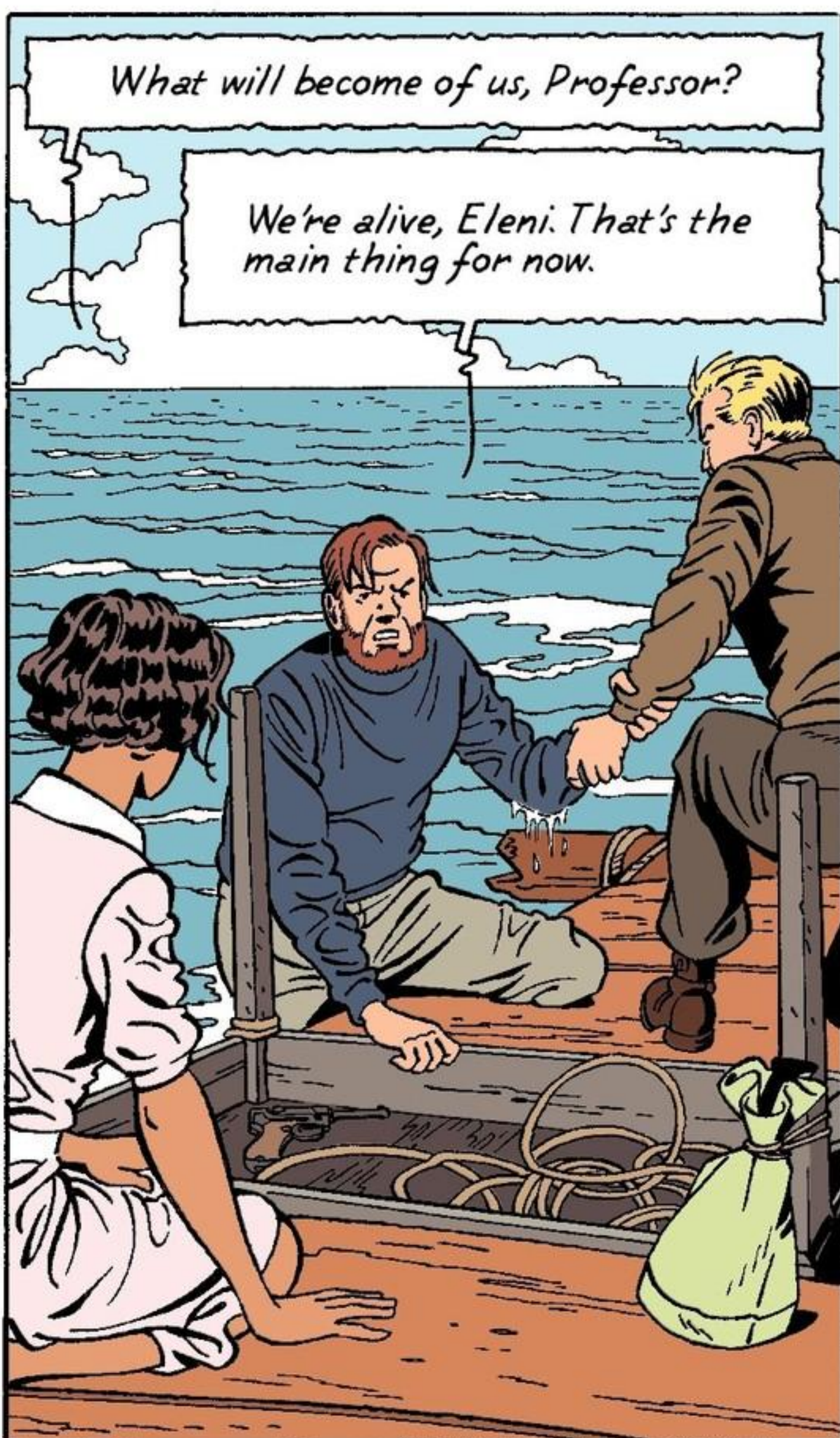
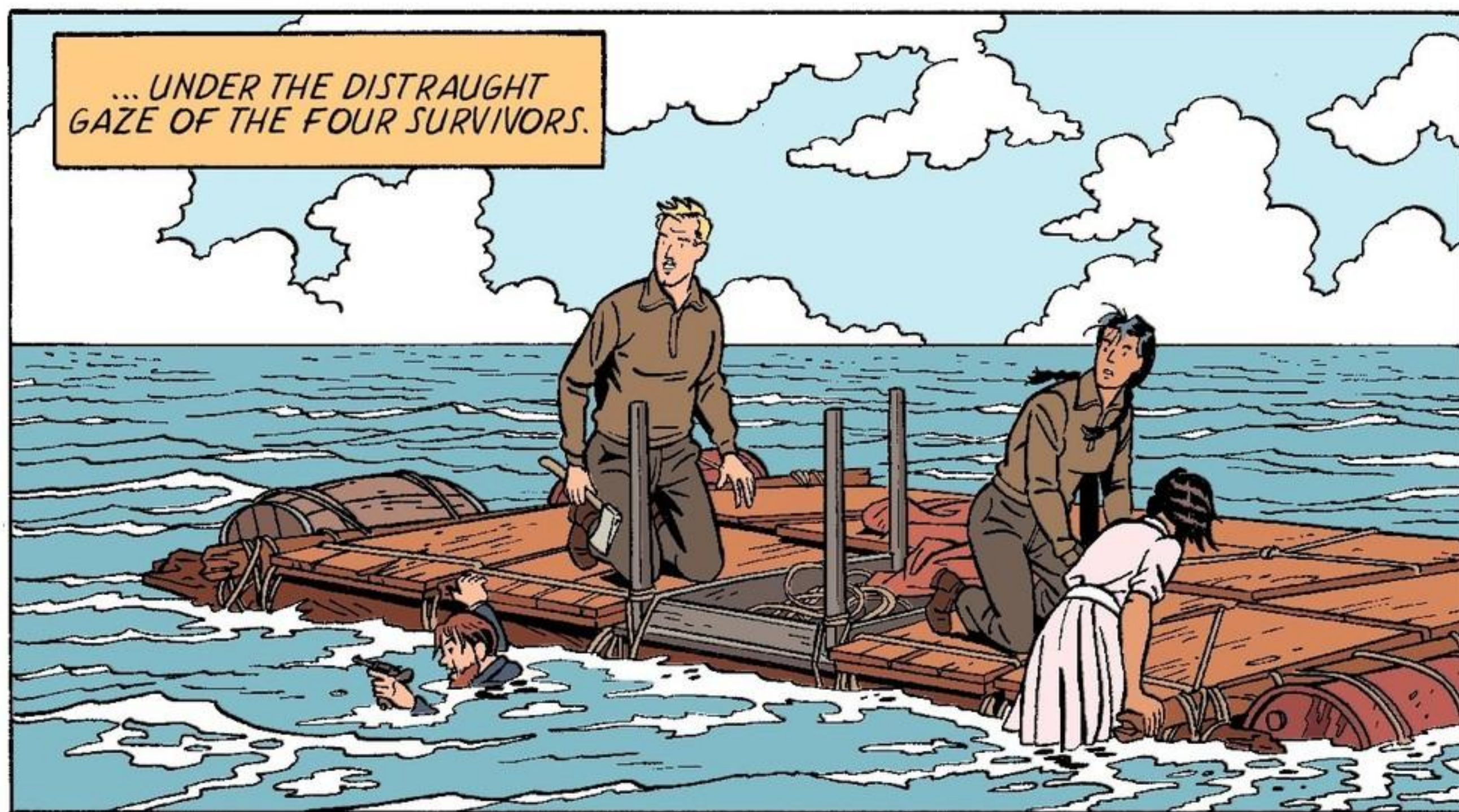
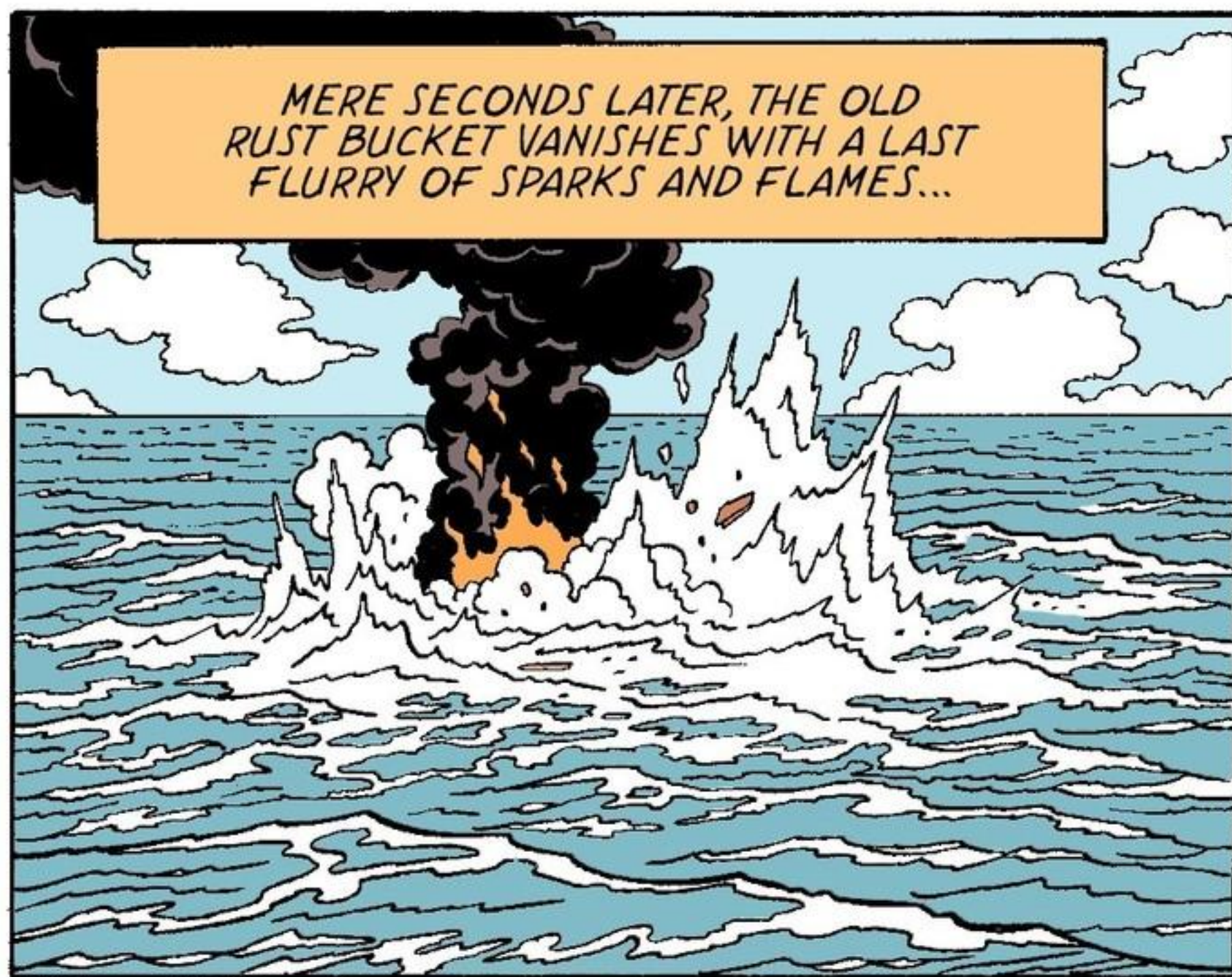


Find some knives, and some empty barrels, planks, anything that floats. Cut ropes and cables, anything that can be used to tie it all together.



THE FIRE'S SPREADING!... EVERYONE IN THE WATER, NOW!...

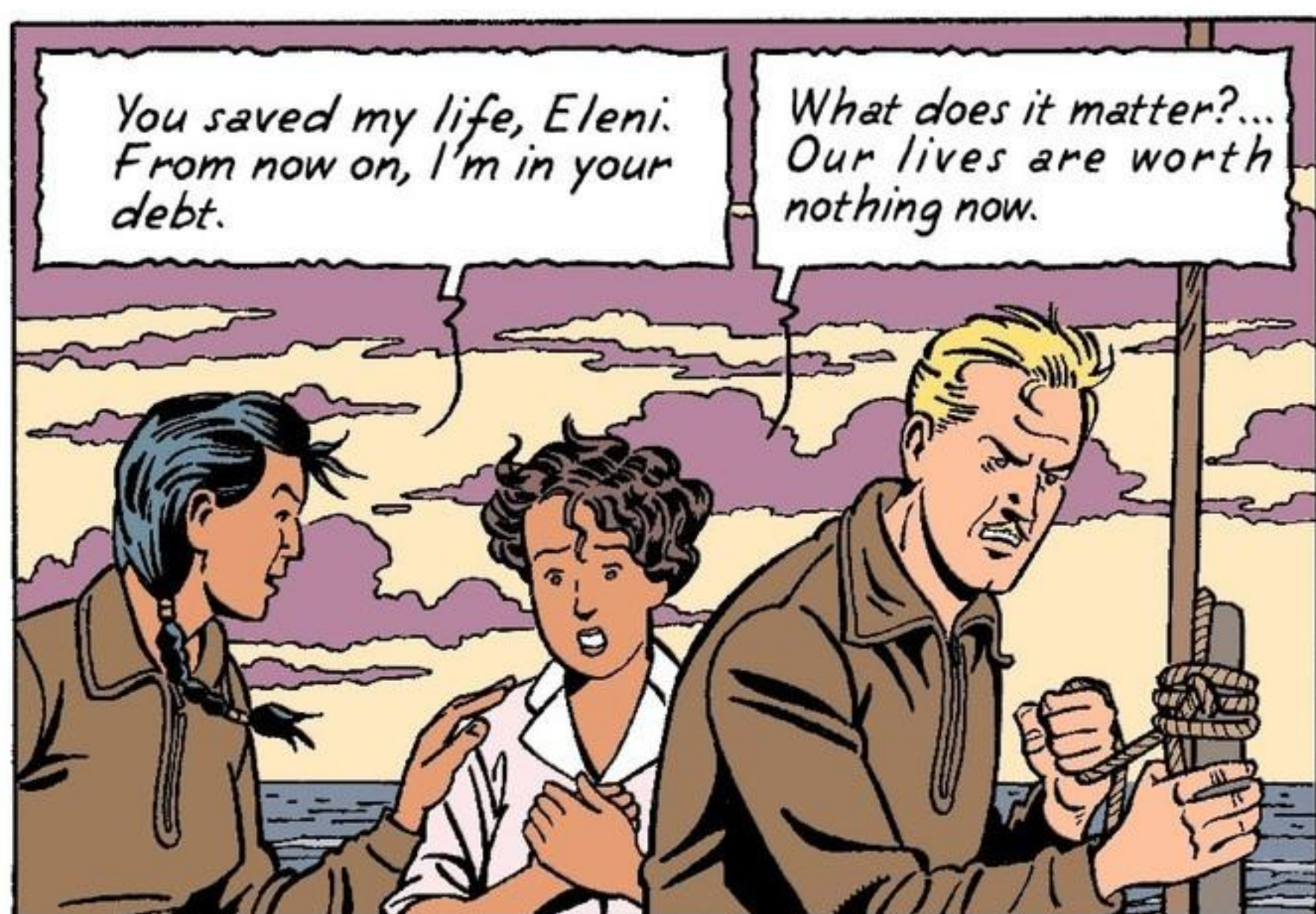






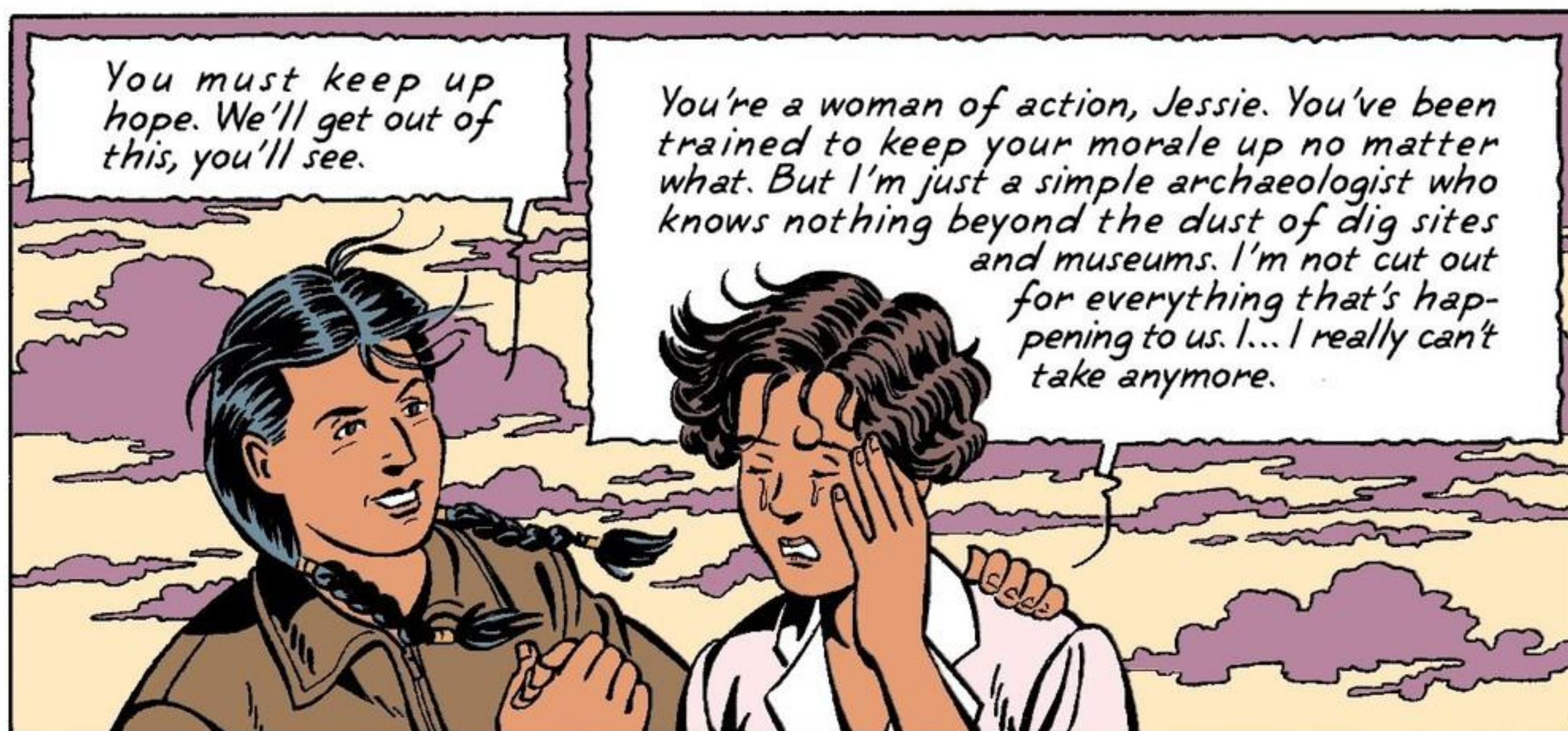
NIGHT INEVITABLY FALLS ON THE SURVIVORS CLINGING TO THEIR FLIMSY RAFT.

Let's try to stay awake as long as possible. Then we'll take turns keeping watch, to make sure none of us falls overboard while sleeping.



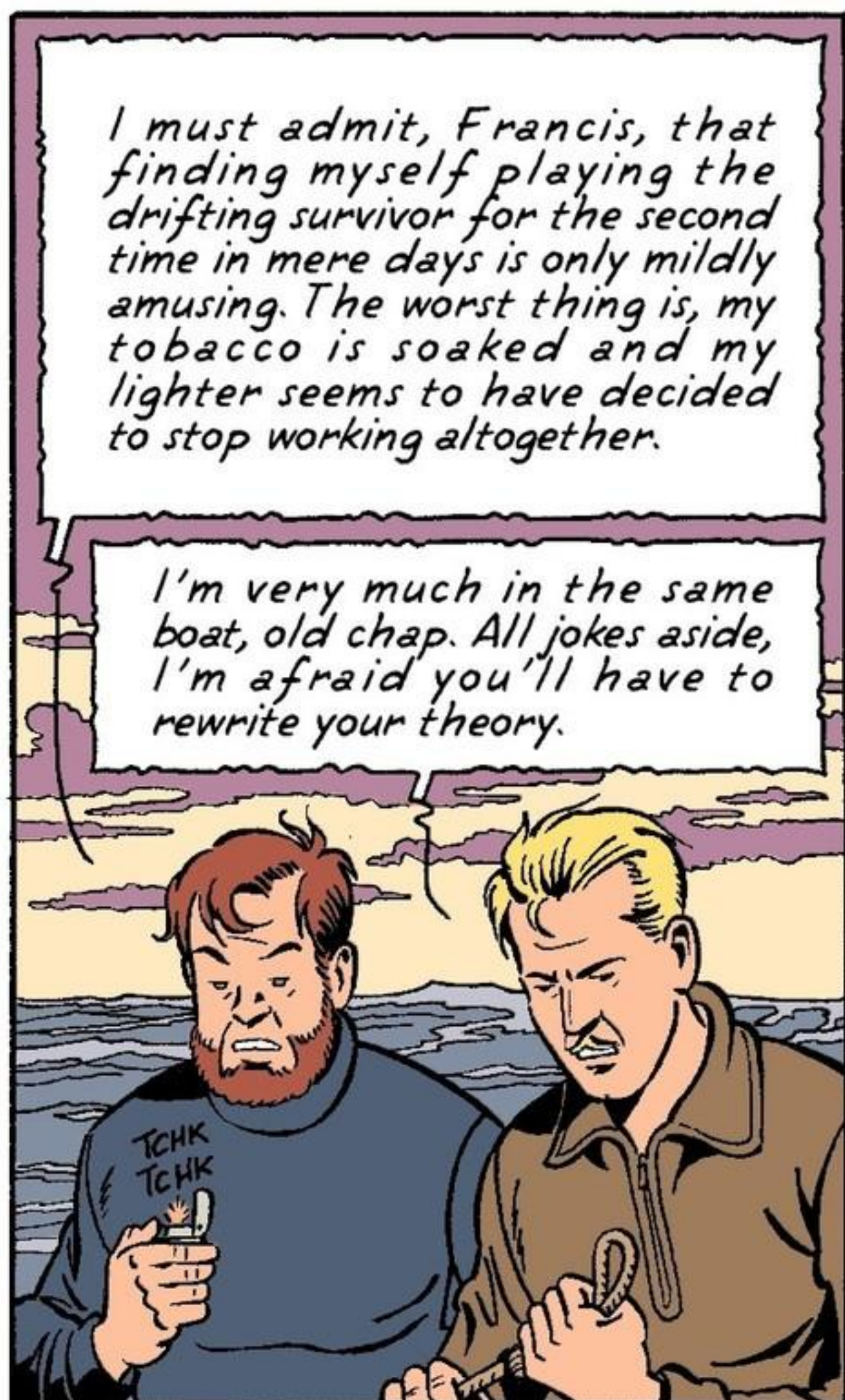
You saved my life, Eleni. From now on, I'm in your debt.

What does it matter?... Our lives are worth nothing now.



You must keep up hope. We'll get out of this, you'll see.

You're a woman of action, Jessie. You've been trained to keep your morale up no matter what. But I'm just a simple archaeologist who knows nothing beyond the dust of dig sites and museums. I'm not cut out for everything that's happening to us. I... I really can't take anymore.



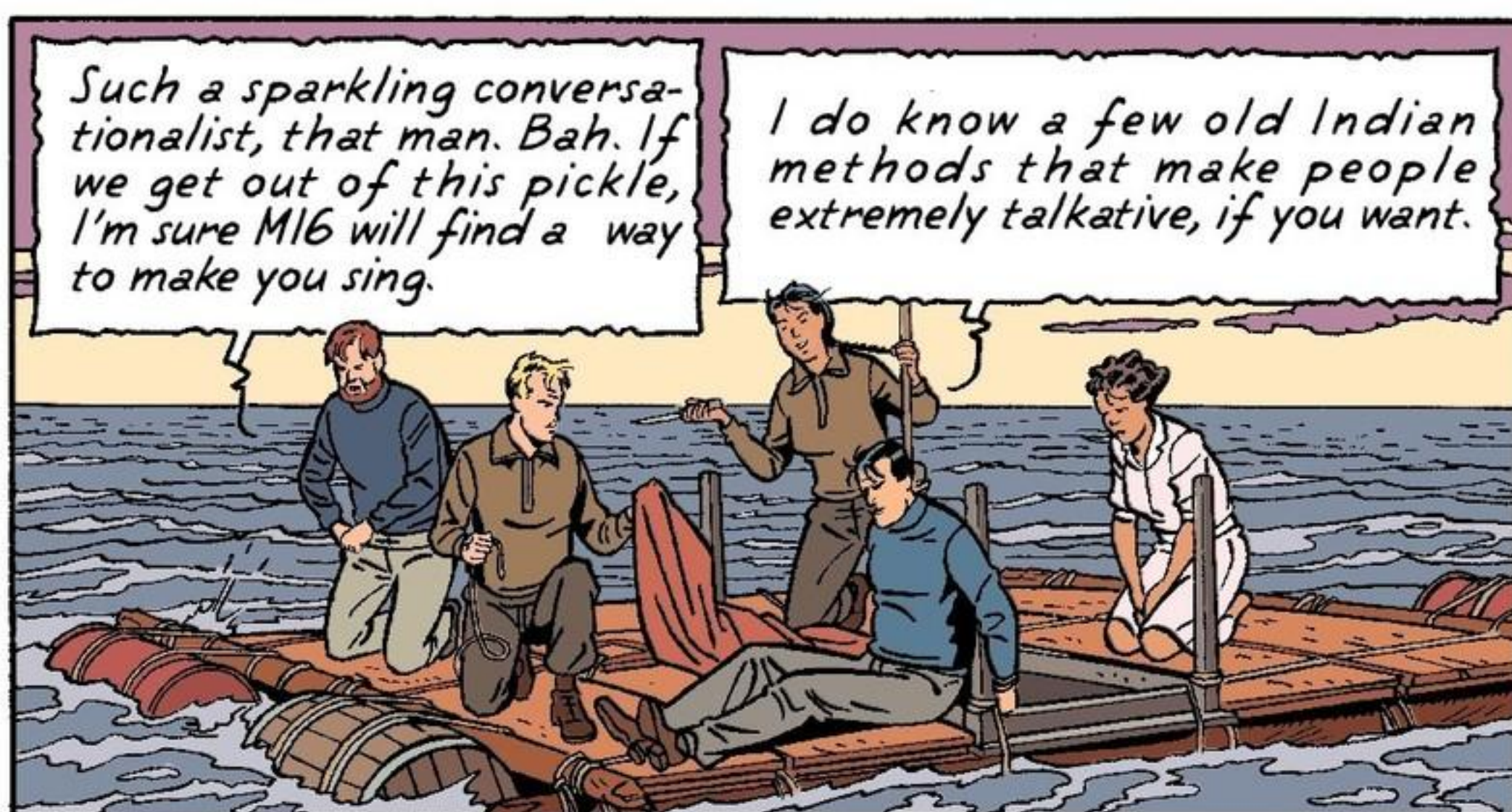
I must admit, Francis, that finding myself playing the drifting survivor for the second time in mere days is only mildly amusing. The worst thing is, my tobacco is soaked and my lighter seems to have decided to stop working altogether.

I'm very much in the same boat, old chap. All jokes aside, I'm afraid you'll have to rewrite your theory.



Apparently, von Stahl doesn't need our services anymore. Probably because all he had to do to find Judas's grave was grab Eleni again. Isn't that right, "Colonel?"

Go to hell!

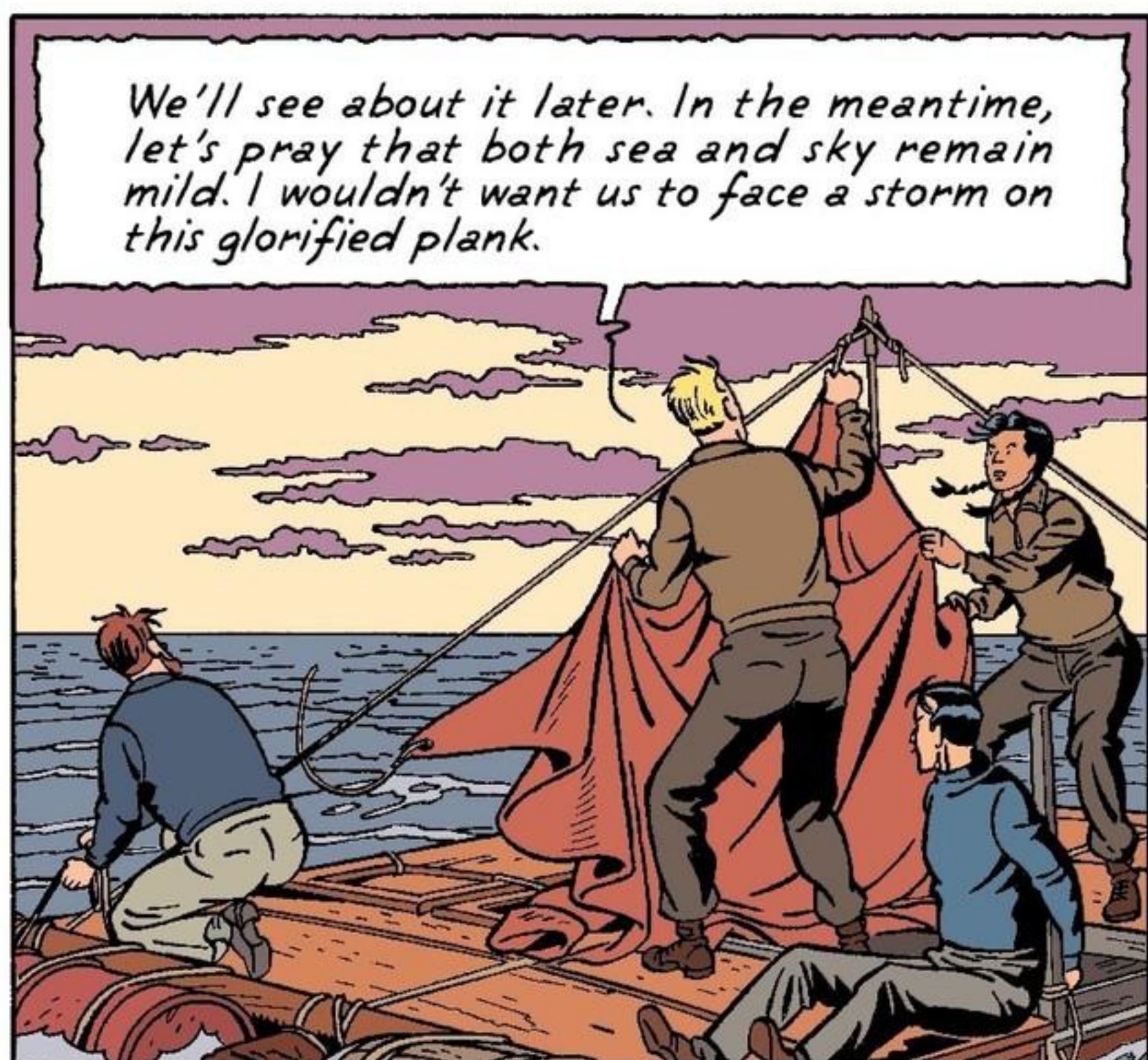


Such a sparkling conversationalist, that man. Bah. If we get out of this pickle, I'm sure M16 will find a way to make you sing.

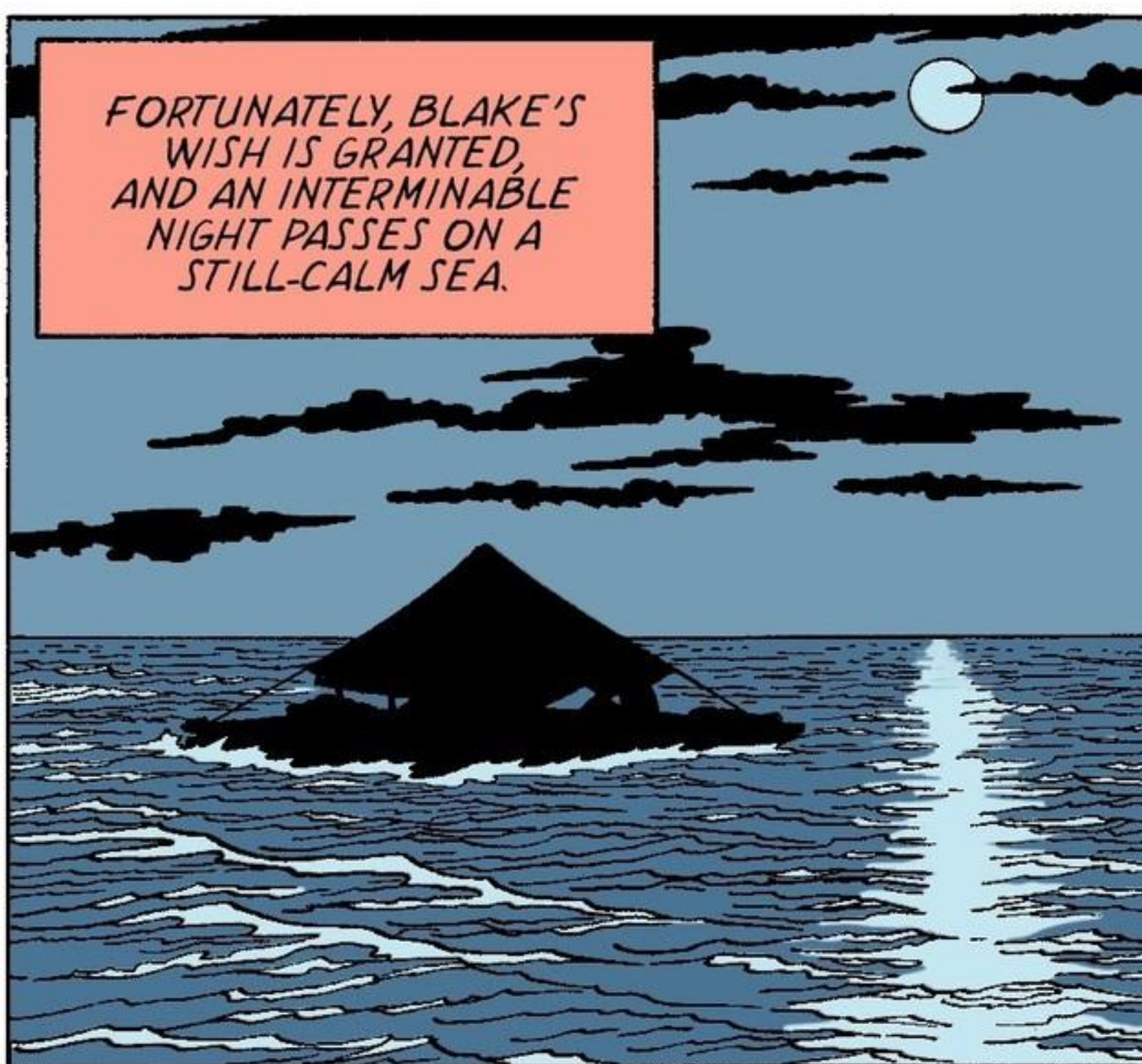
I do know a few old Indian methods that make people extremely talkative, if you want.



Hmm... There's an idea... What do you think, "Colonel?"



We'll see about it later. In the meantime, let's pray that both sea and sky remain mild. I wouldn't want us to face a storm on this glorified plank.



FORTUNATELY, BLAKE'S WISH IS GRANTED, AND AN INTERMINABLE NIGHT PASSES ON A STILL-CALM SEA.



BUT, AT DAWN...

Oh, hello, Professor Mortimer!

?

NOT BELIEVING HIS EYES, A STUNNED MORTIMER RECOGNISES, ABOARD A SMALL RENTAL YACHT, THE ENGLISH COUPLE WHOSE INTERVENTION HAD ALLOWED HIM TO RETRIEVE THE MISSING PIECE OF NICODEMUS'S MANUSCRIPT*.

Hold on, my friends. We'll save you!

?? ?!



MOMENTS LATER, HAVING COME ABOARD, MORTIMER INTRODUCES OUR FRIENDS TO THEIR SAVIOURS.

Arnold and Mildred Robinson. How do you do?

How do you do?

How do you do?

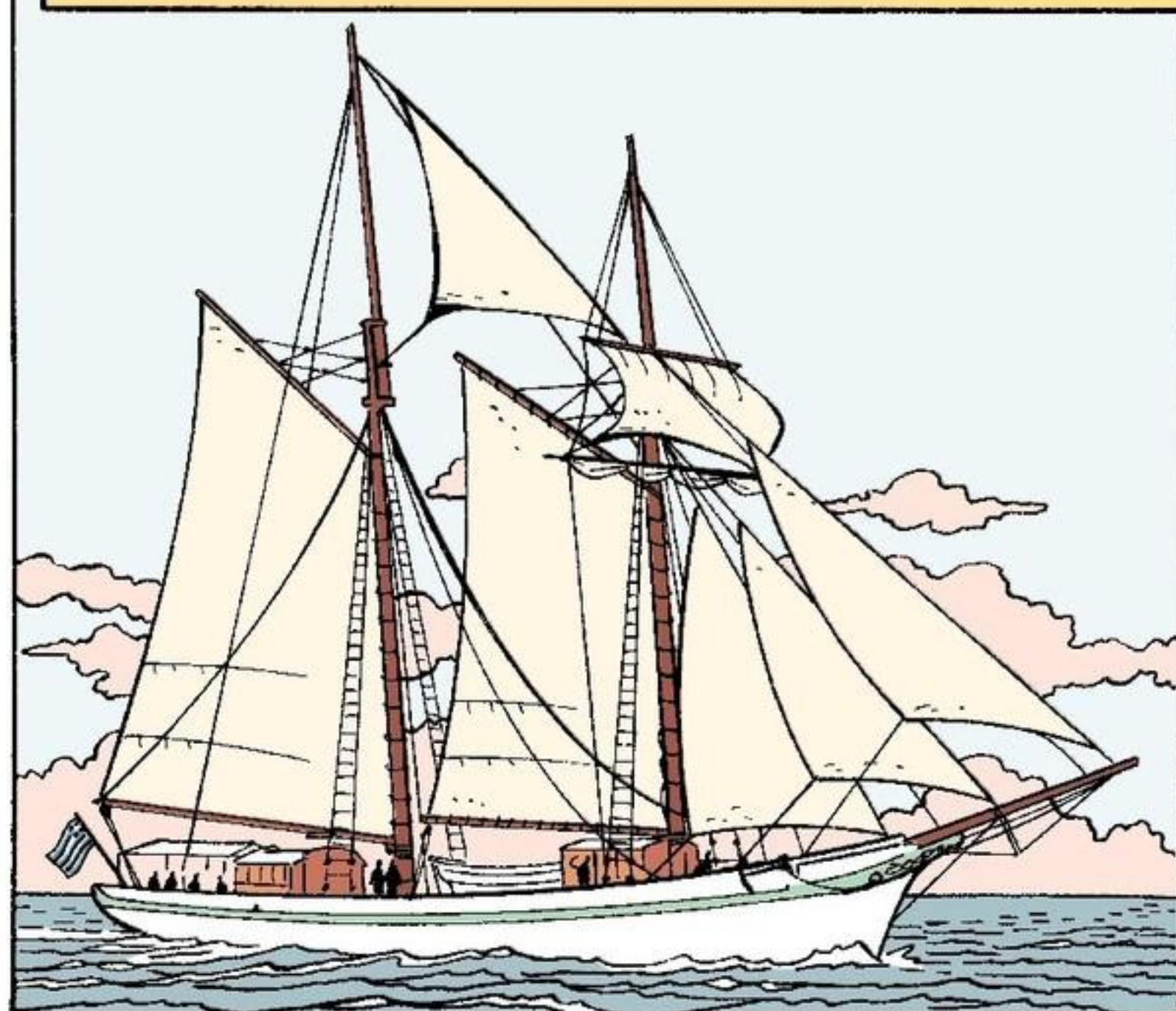
How do you do?



THEN, AFTER HAVING SECURELY TIED UP OLRİK IN THE HOLD...



... EVERYONE IS RECOVERING AROUND A HEARTY BREAKFAST.



I see, Professor, that you've successfully apprehended the criminal you were chasing. Although it looks like it wasn't an easy task.

Our ship did sink.



But you'll forgive me if I can't tell you more about it. This is a secret mission under the command of my friend, Captain Blake.

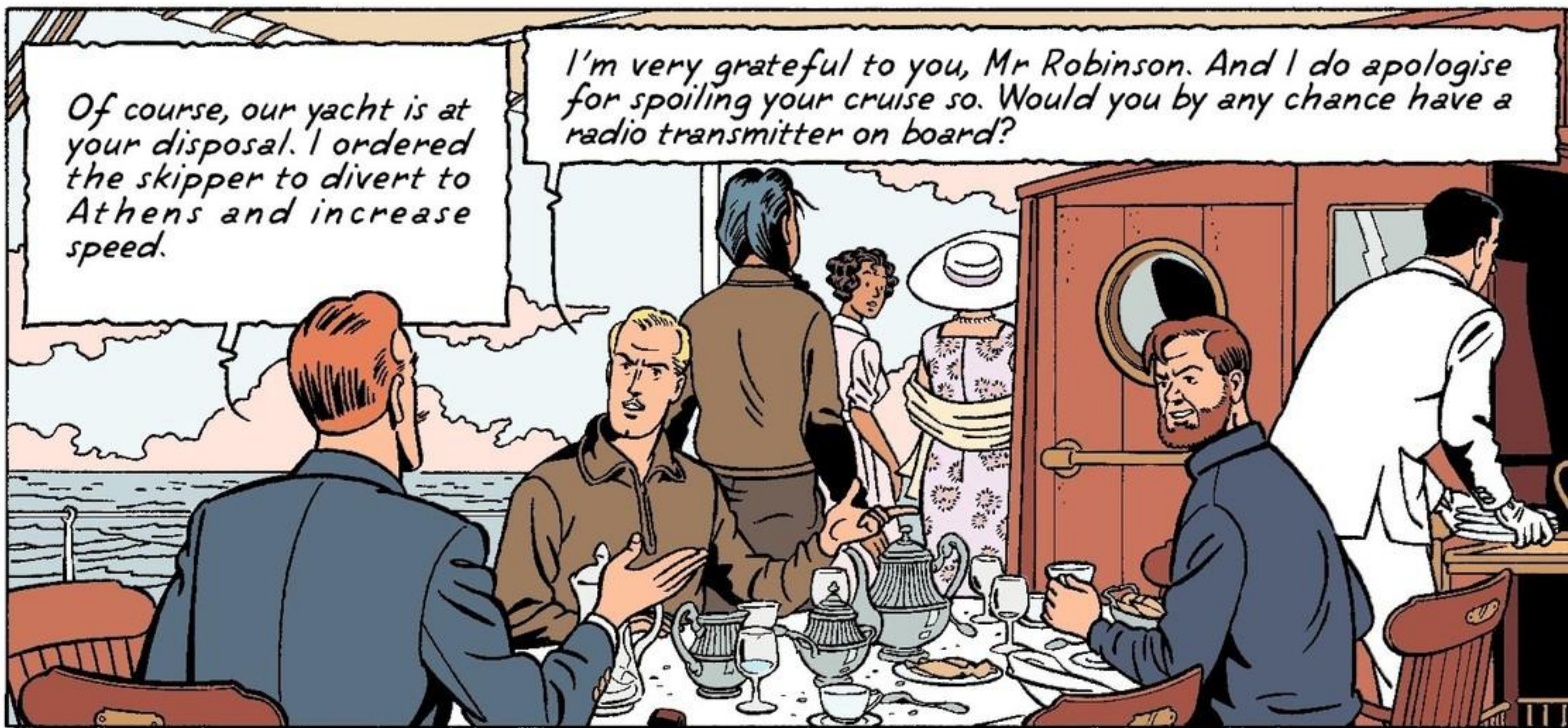
Ever since the memorable affair that saw him on every newspaper's front page, no one in England is unaware of the famous Captain Blake.



When I tell my friends I had breakfast with two of the most renowned citizens of our Kingdom—and after rescuing them from a shipwreck, to boot—they will be green with jealousy. Hee! Hee! Hee!



*SEE PART 1.



Of course, our yacht is at your disposal. I ordered the skipper to divert to Athens and increase speed.

I'm very grateful to you, Mr Robinson. And I do apologise for spoiling your cruise so. Would you by any chance have a radio transmitter on board?

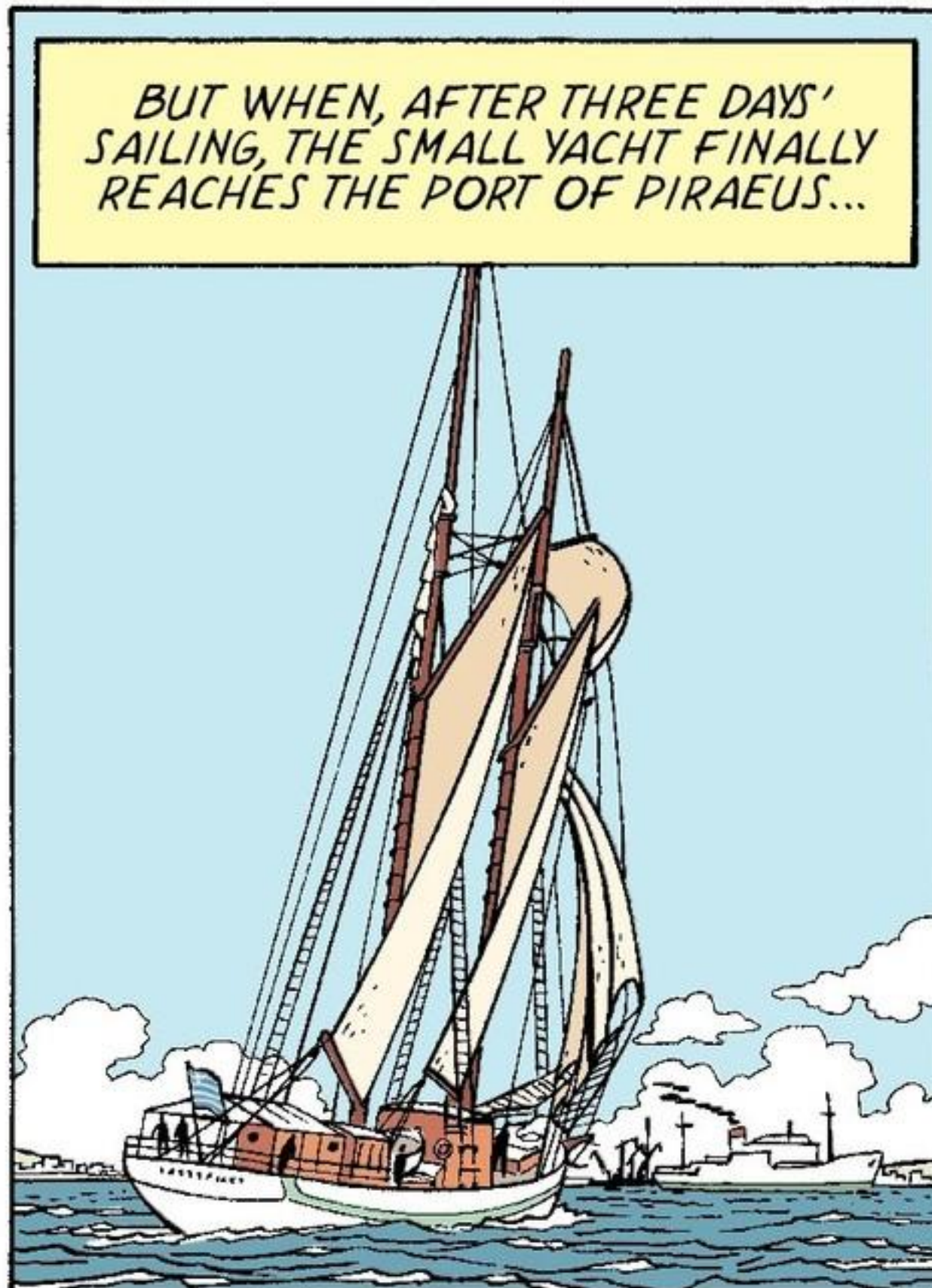


I do believe we have something like that, yes.

With your permission, I'd like to contact M16 in Athens so they can come and take delivery of our package as soon as we arrive.



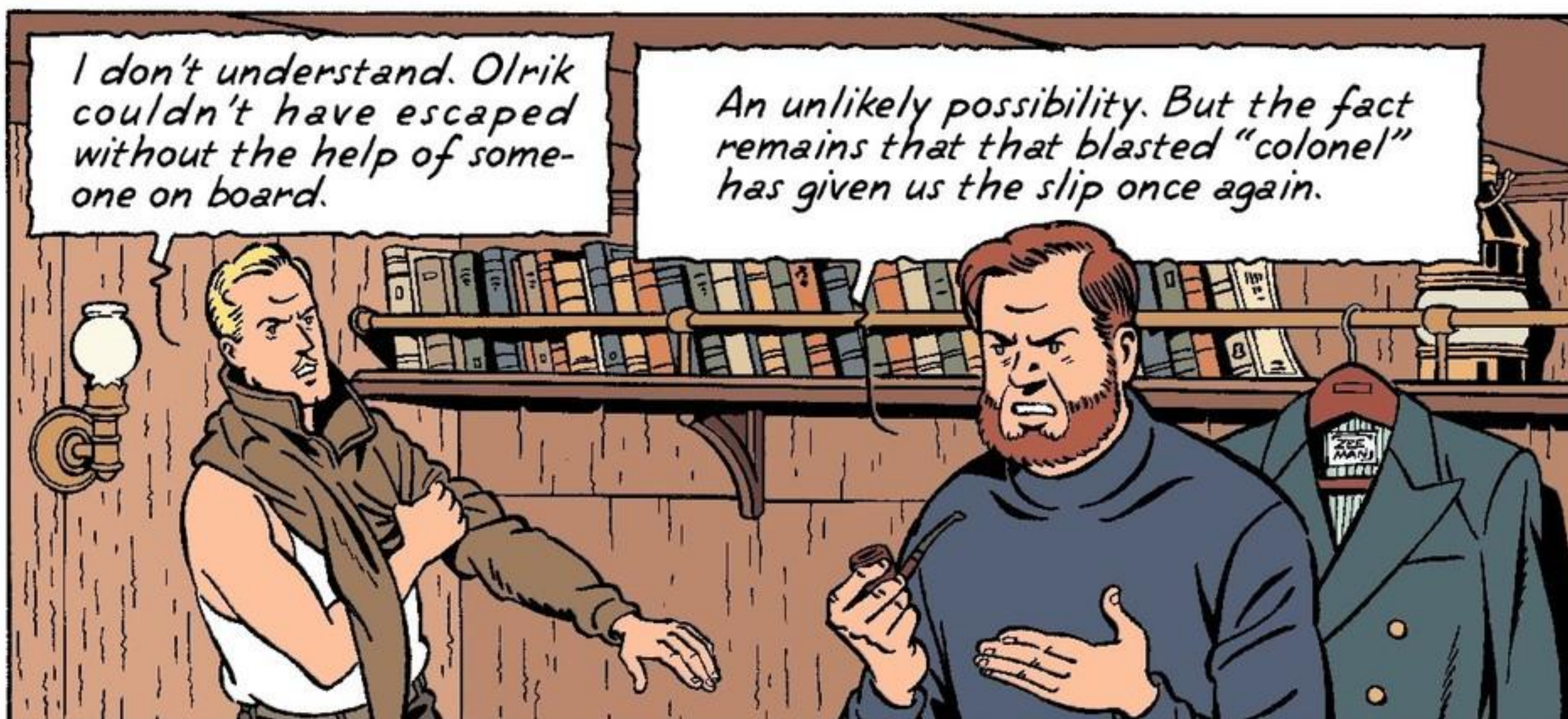
DURING THEIR TRIP TOWARDS THE GREEK CAPITAL, BLAKE AND MORTIMER ENDEAVOUR TO MAKE OLRİK CONFESS WHERE COUNT VON STAHL IS HIDING WITH HIS PRISONERS. IN VAIN, THOUGH, AS THE VILLAIN STUBBORNLY REFUSES TO UTTER A SINGLE WORD.



BUT WHEN, AFTER THREE DAYS' SAILING, THE SMALL YACHT FINALLY REACHES THE PORT OF PIRAEUS...



... THE M16 AGENTS WHO WERE WAITING TO TAKE CUSTODY OF OLRİK ARE BEWILDERED TO DISCOVER THAT HE'S MYSTERIOUSLY DISAPPEARED.

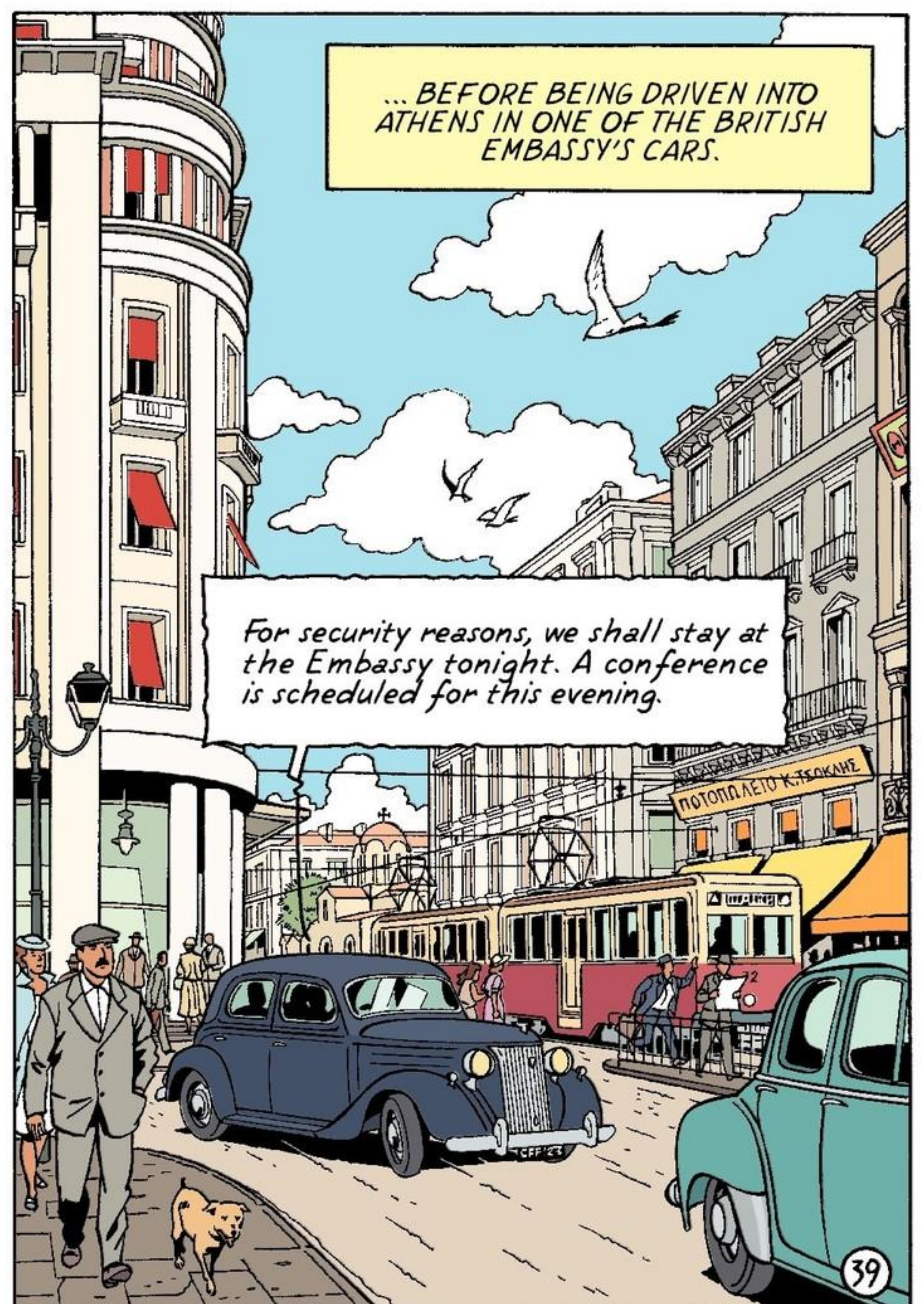


I don't understand. Olrık couldn't have escaped without the help of someone on board.

An unlikely possibility. But the fact remains that that blasted "colonel" has given us the slip once again.



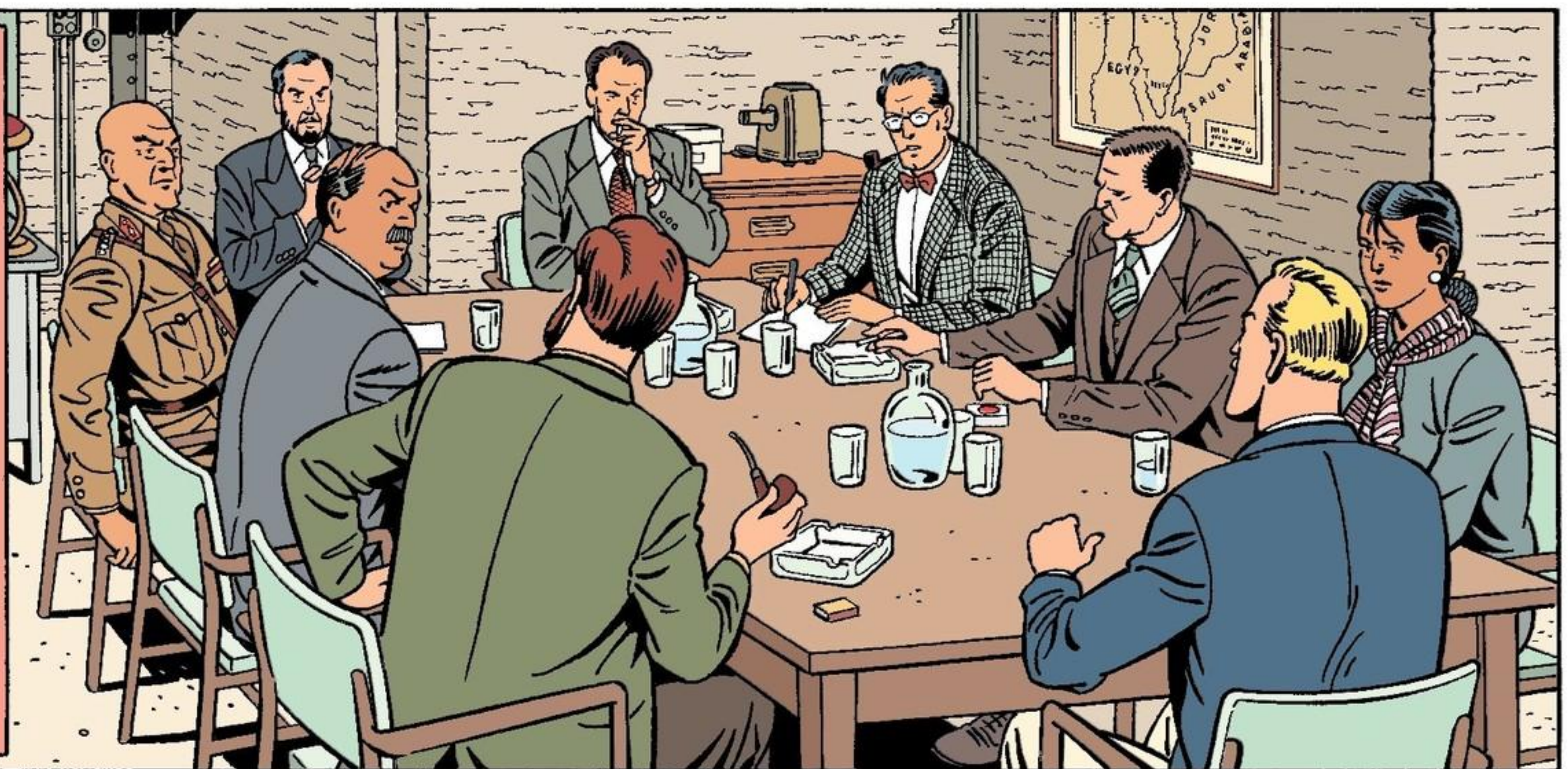
ALL THAT'S LEFT FOR OUR FRIENDS IS TO SAY GOODBYE TO THE ROBINSONS, AFTER THANKING THEM WARMLY ONE LAST TIME...



... BEFORE BEING DRIVEN INTO ATHENS IN ONE OF THE BRITISH EMBASSY'S CARS.

For security reasons, we shall stay at the Embassy tonight. A conference is scheduled for this evening.

AS BLAKE HAD ANNOUNCED, AN IMPORTANT MEETING BEGINS AT 6 PM IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM OF THE BRITISH EMBASSY'S SUB-BASEMENT, FAR FROM PRYING EARS. PRESENT THERE ARE: COMMANDER WILLIAM STEELE, HEAD OF BRITISH FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE, COME ESPECIALLY FROM LONDON; THE LOCAL M16 STATION CHIEF; THE CIA STATION CHIEF IN ATHENS; COLONEL GEORGIPOULOS, DIRECTOR OF GREEK COUNTERINTELLIGENCE; INSPECTOR KAMANTIS OF THE CITY'S CRIMINAL POLICE; JOHN CALLOWAY, HEAD OF THE OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT OF THE FBI; HIS DEPUTY JESSIE WINGO; CAPTAIN FRANCIS BLAKE, HEAD OF M15; AND PROFESSOR PHILIP MORTIMER.



AFTER THE PROFESSOR HAS GIVEN A DETAILED ACCOUNTING OF RECENT EVENTS, IT'S BLAKE'S TURN TO SPEAK.



It goes without saying that I take full responsibility for the failure of the boarding action against the Arax. A failure that, unfortunately, cost two of your agents their lives, Commander Steele.

Hmm... Are you saying there's a mole among your agents?

Or among yours, Colonel Georgiopoulos. Your services are always told—officially—about all M16 or CIA operations on Greek territory.

Good shot!



Occupational hazard, old boy. No one could have imagined you'd get torpedoed by a U-boat.



True. Moreover, it means von Stahl was waiting for us. And, therefore, that he knew about the mission assigned to the M16 commandos.

Hmm... It does warrant investigation. But let's get to the mysterious disappearance of your prisoner, that Olrik character. Do you think the Robinsons could be in on it? Their presence so close to where your ship sank is rather surprising, isn't it?

I'll grant you that. But, with all due respect, Colonel, I doubt the Robinsons are anything other than what they appear to be: a wealthy tourist couple treating themselves to a second honeymoon in your beautiful country. Their presence was pure coincidence... and a real stroke of luck for us.

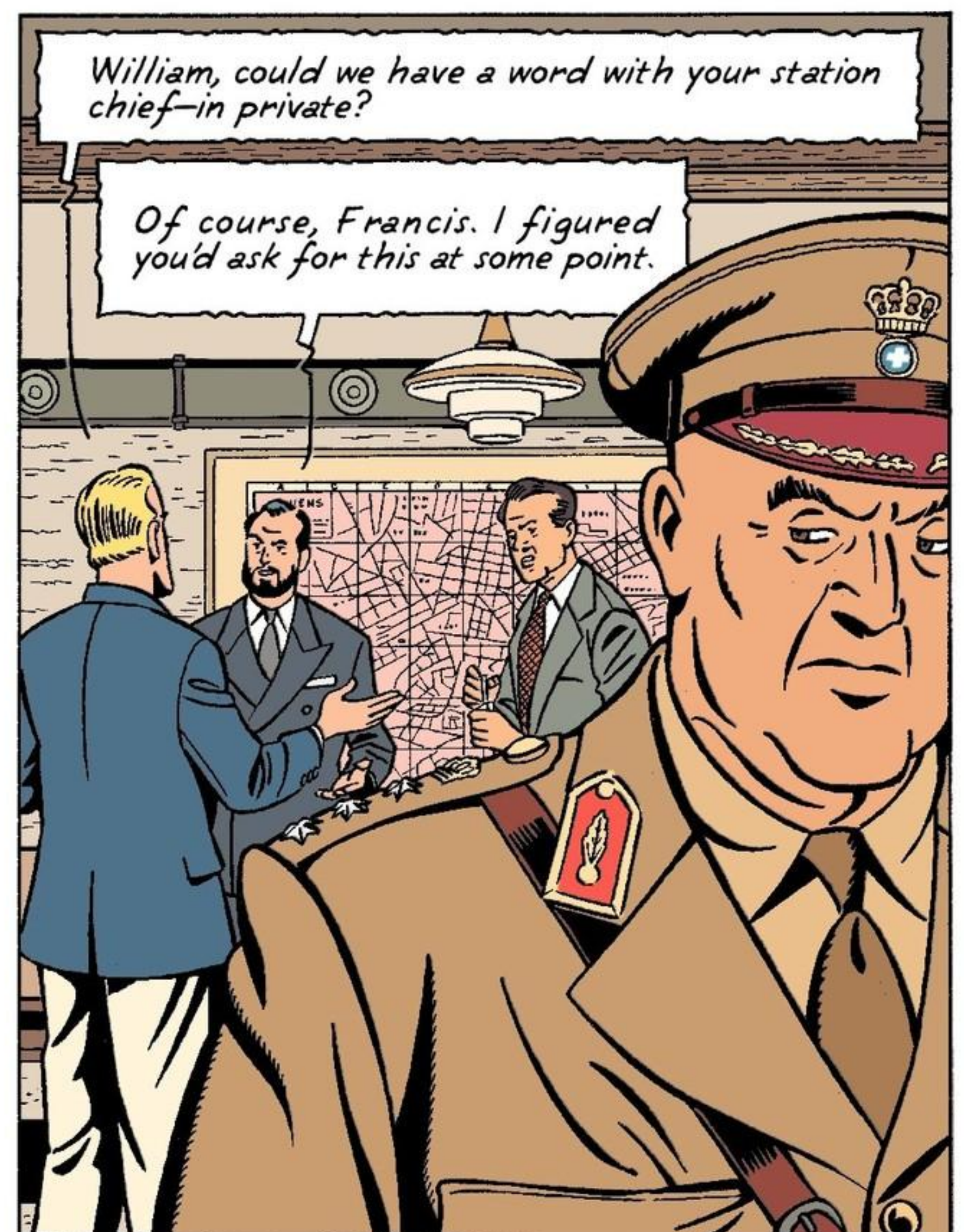
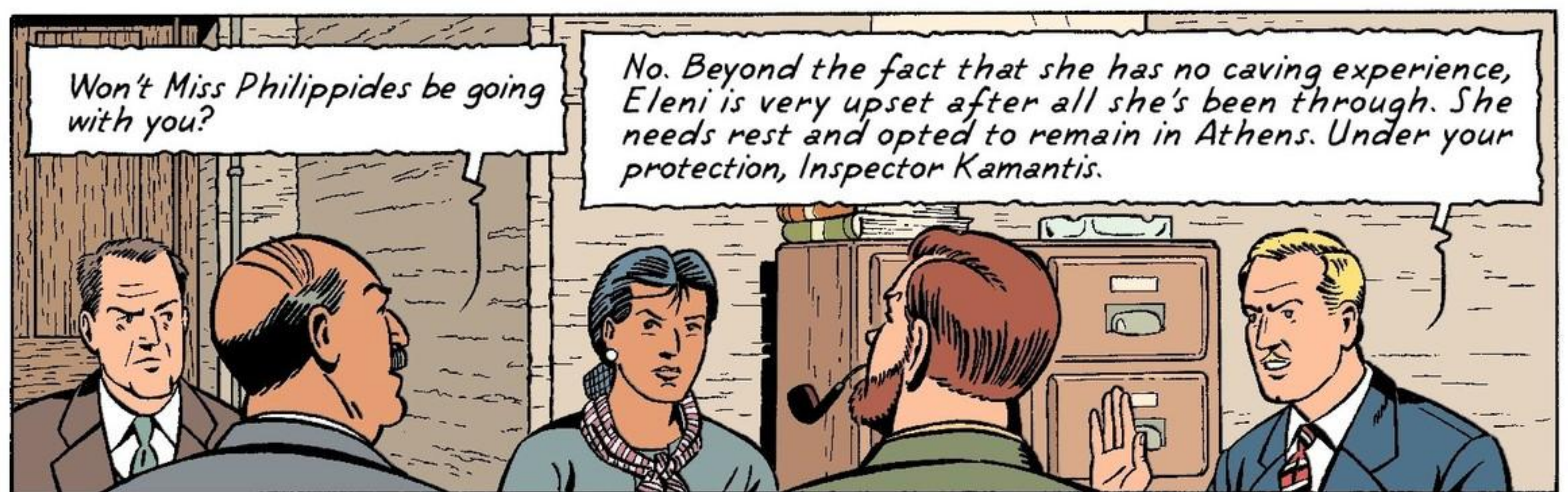
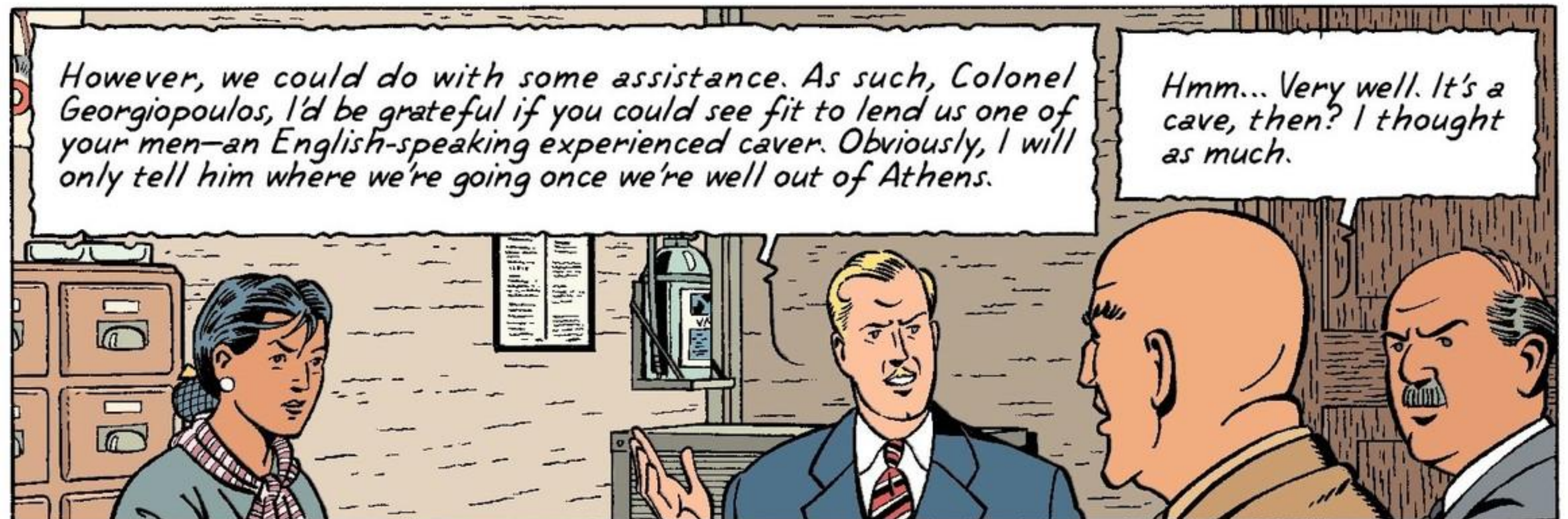
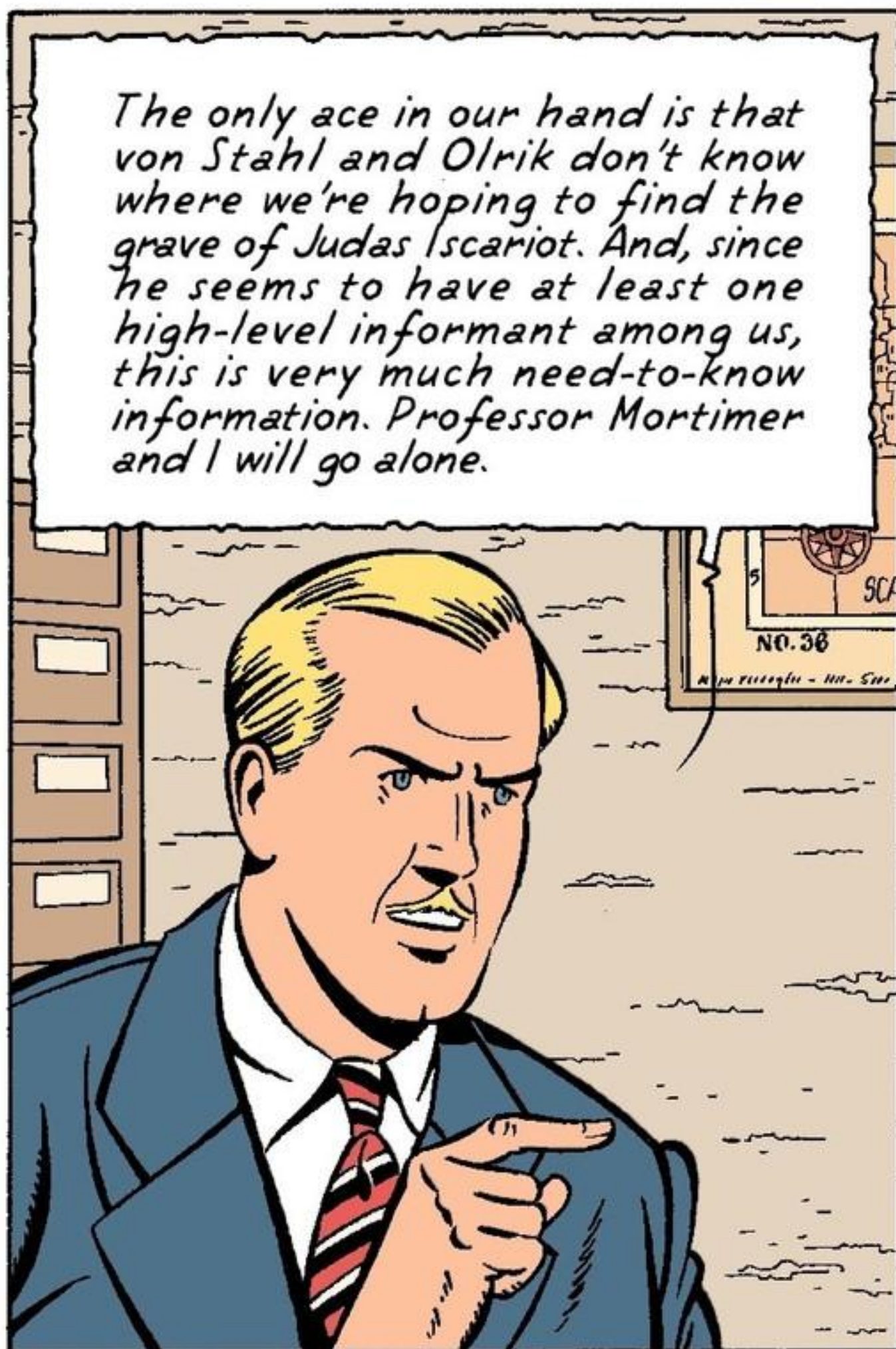


Hmm... Still, I've had one of their crew replaced by a trusted agent, just in case. As for that submarine of yours, our Navy has been unable to detect even a whiff of it.

So, our only chance to catch von Stahl will be during the exchange Professor Mortimer theorised: Judas's pieces of silver for Jim Radcliff and Dr Markopoulos. Captain Blake, where would that hypothetical grave be, according to your research?

Sorry... I can't tell you that.





A FEW DAYS LATER, THREE HIKERS AND A HEAVILY LADEN DONKEY ARE WALKING ALONG A NARROW TRAIL IN A DESOLATE REGION OF THE WESTERN GREEK COAST.



Owww, my back! I'm afraid it's official, old chap: We're not getting any younger.

My joints are in full agreement.



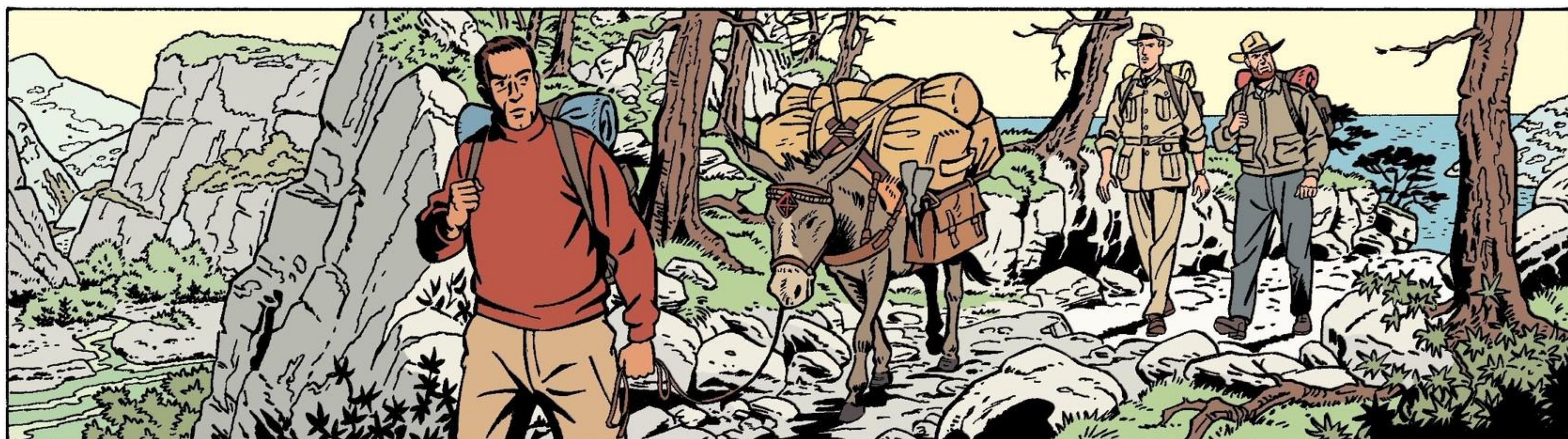
Is it much further, Konstantinos?

A few more miles. If we don't tarry too much, we'll be there before nightfall.

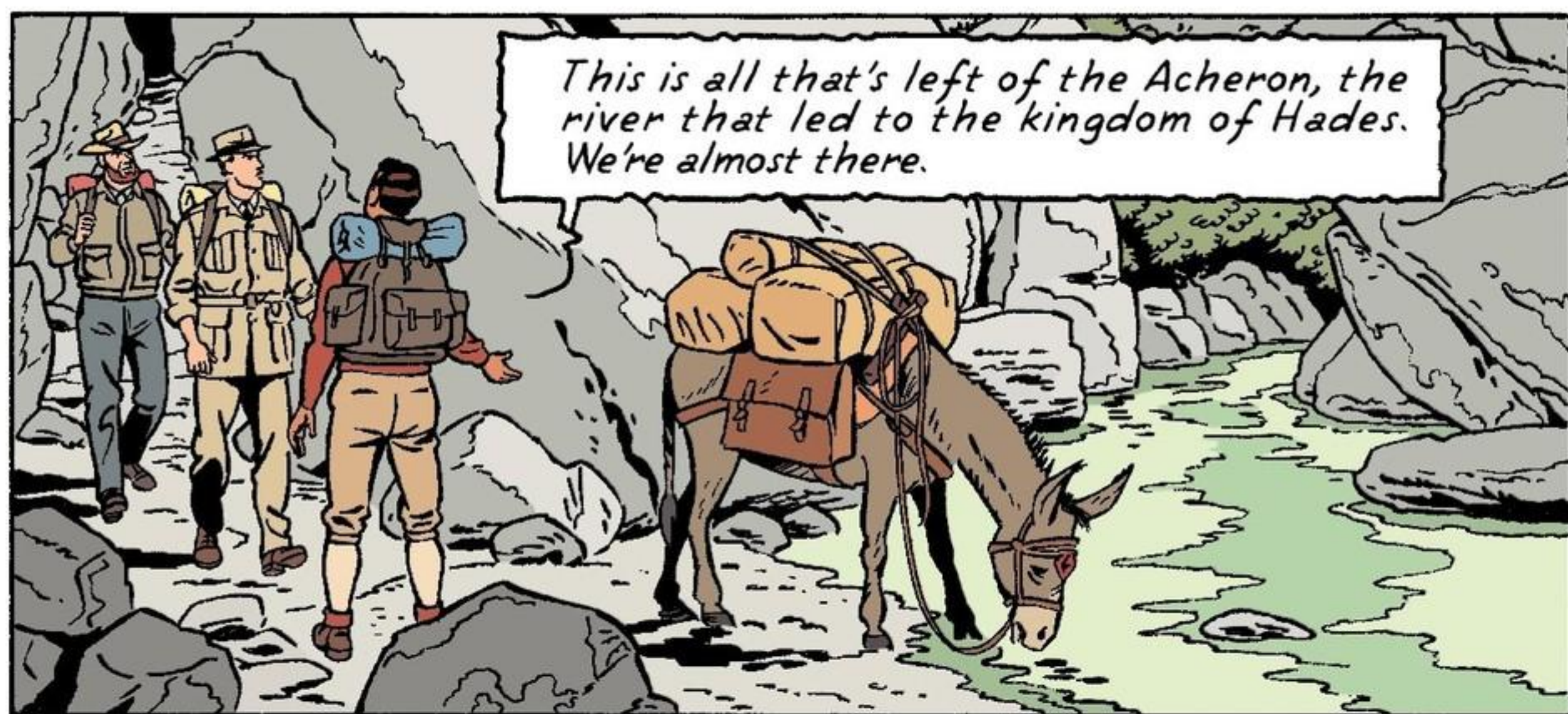


This isn't exactly a crowded area. We haven't met a soul since this morning.

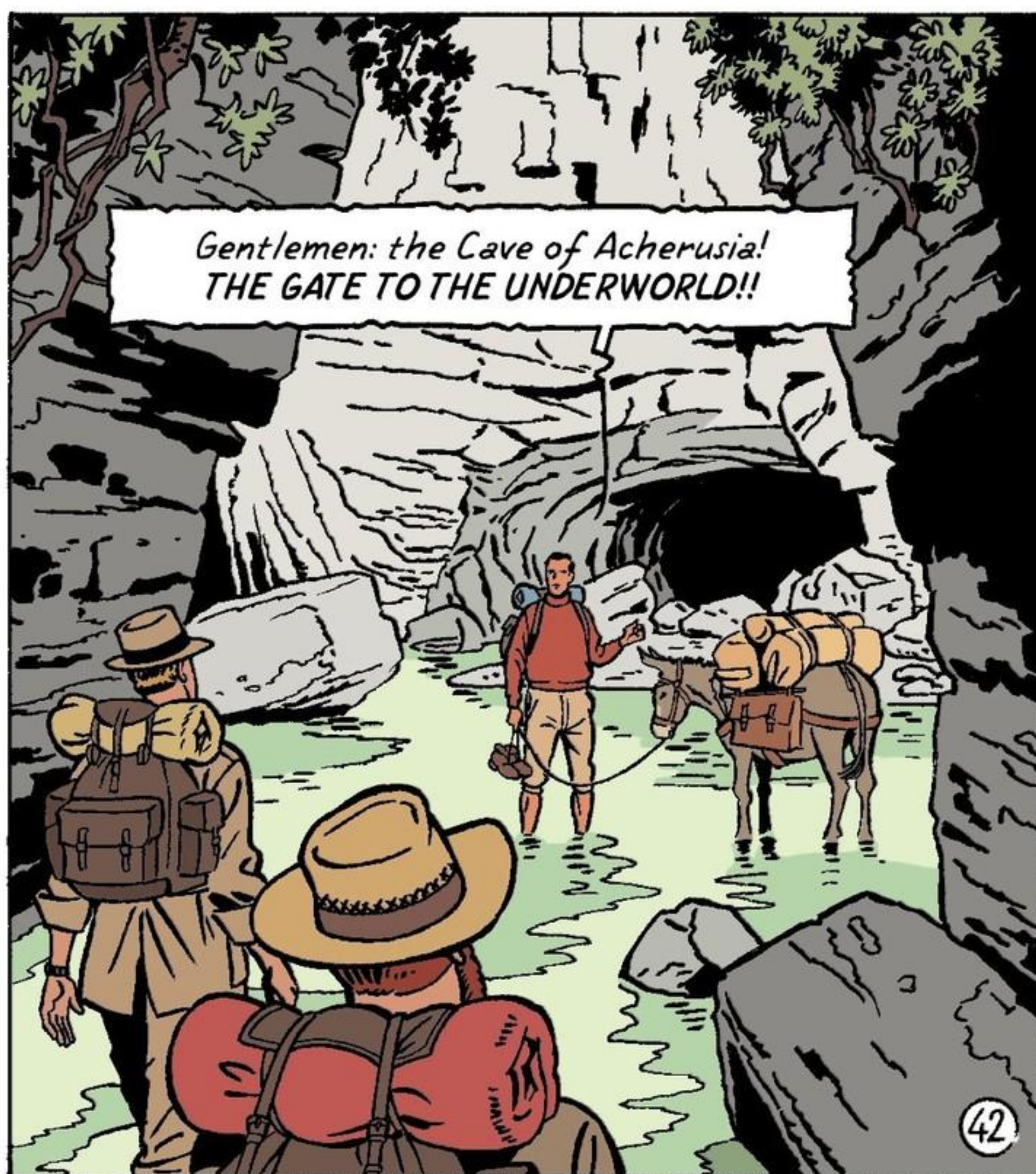
This region is mostly uninhabited, as it is no good for farming or breeding livestock. Besides, it's located on a seismic fault, and earthquakes are quite commonplace.



This is all that's left of the Acheron, the river that led to the kingdom of Hades. We're almost there.



Gentlemen: the Cave of Acherusia!
THE GATE TO THE UNDERWORLD!!



THE NEXT MORNING AT DAWN, AFTER A GOOD NIGHT'S REST UNDER THE STARS, OUR FRIENDS ARE FINALLY PREPARING TO ENTER THE MYSTERIOUS CAVE.

We'll have to be careful. Some of the rocks have become unstable because of the seismic tremors.

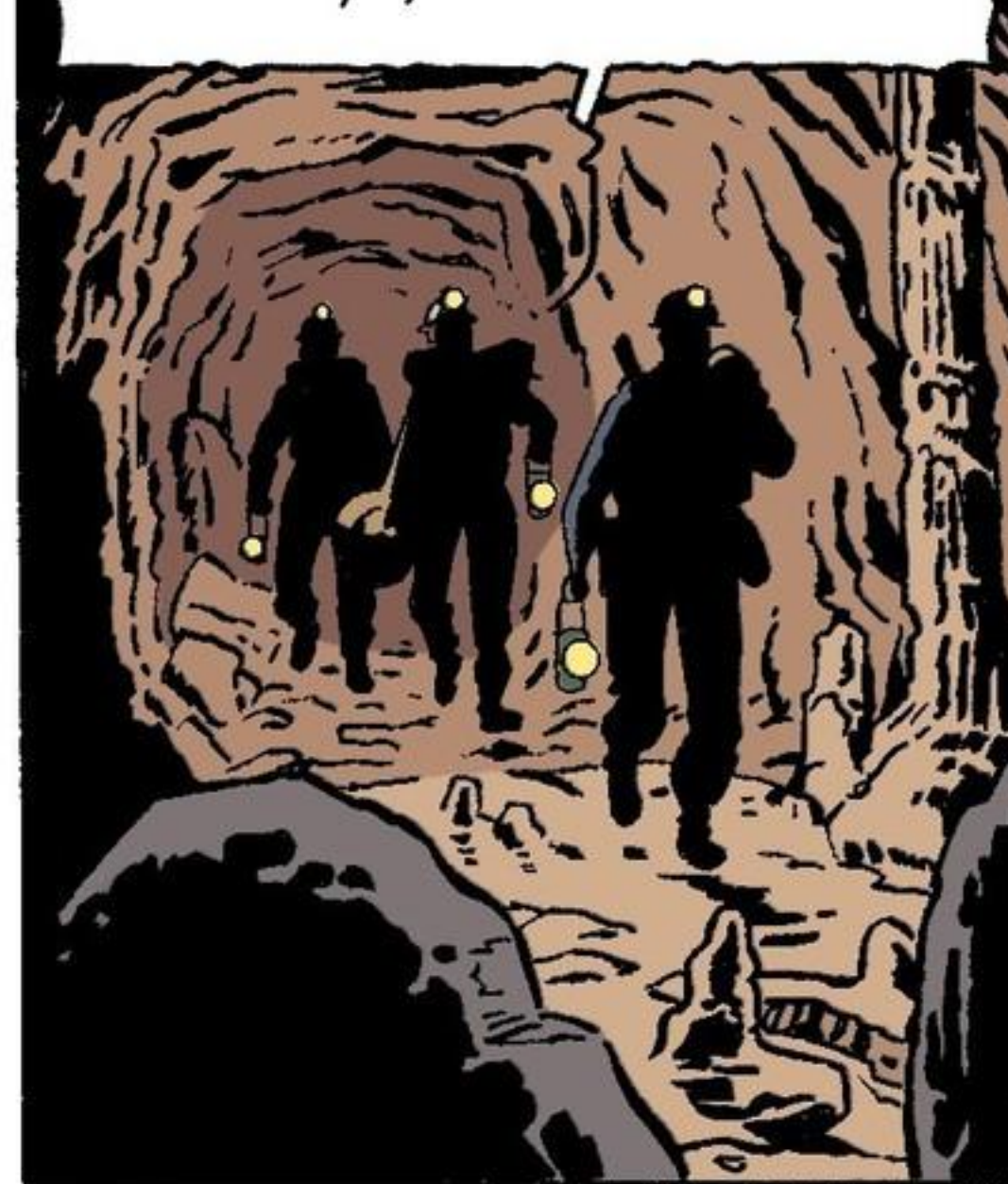


Have you been here before?

Twice, with my caving club. But we didn't go further than the part already explored.



Further in, there's a 30-foot sheer drop. I'll set up a pulley system to bring down some of our equipment.



THE OPERATION IS COMPLETED IN LESS THAN AN HOUR.



Easy... Easy... That's good.

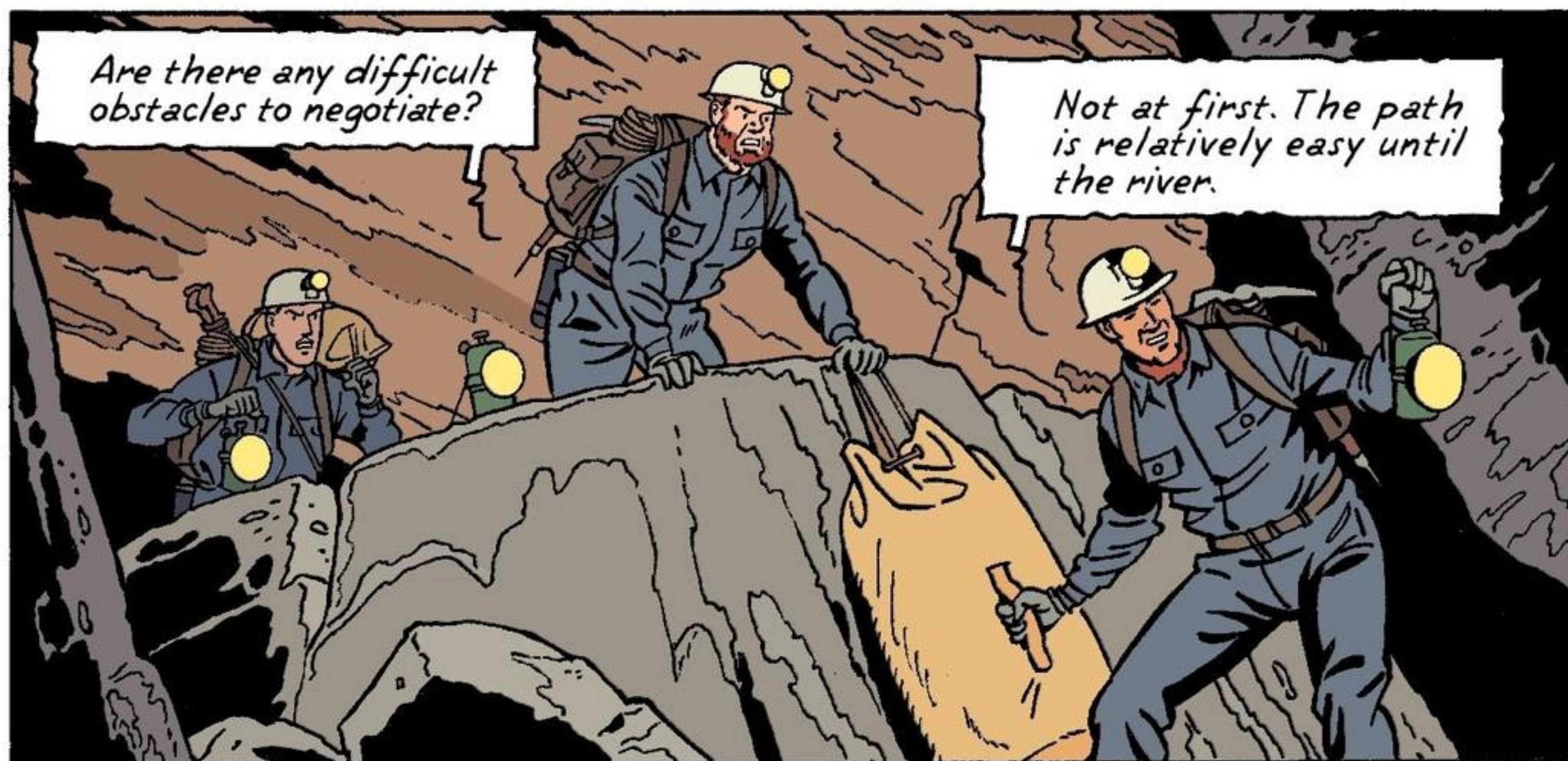
Let's take only the essentials. If you decide to prolong our expedition, I'll come back to fetch what we'll need to set up a bivouac inside the caves.

All right. Let's go!



Are there any difficult obstacles to negotiate?

Not at first. The path is relatively easy until the river.

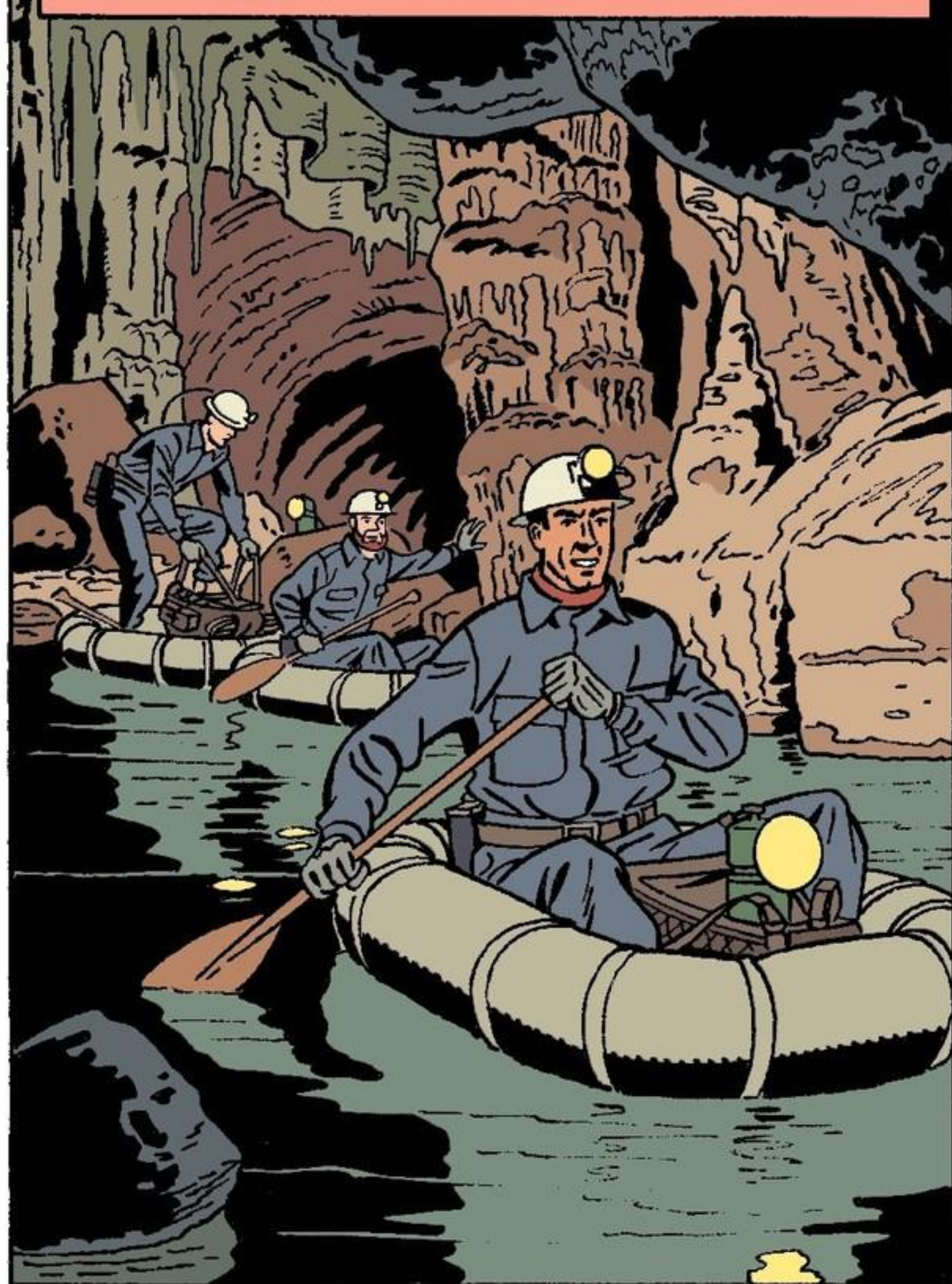


There it is. The river our ancestors called the Styx, the underground river that marks the border between the kingdom of the dead and that of the living.

I hope you're not superstitious, gentlemen.



HALF AN HOUR LATER, AFTER INFLATING THEIR RUBBER RAFTS, OUR FRIENDS BEGIN PADDLING DOWN THE MYTHICAL RIVER, LED BY KONSTANTINOS.



So, it is on this river that Charon, ferryman of Hades, carried the souls of the deceased to the place of their judgement.



Precisely. Which is why ancient Greeks would place a silver coin in the mouth of their dead, so they could pay Charon for their crossing. Those who couldn't pay would be condemned to wander in limbo for eternity.

Isn't it the water of the Styx that was supposed to make you invulnerable?



That's right. Thetis, Achilles' mother, dipped her newborn son in it, holding him by the heel.

Which wasn't enough to make him immortal. At the siege of Troy, proud Achilles died of an arrow—in the heel, as it was—shot by Paris, son of King Priam, who had kidnapped the beautiful Helen and thus triggered that 10-year war.

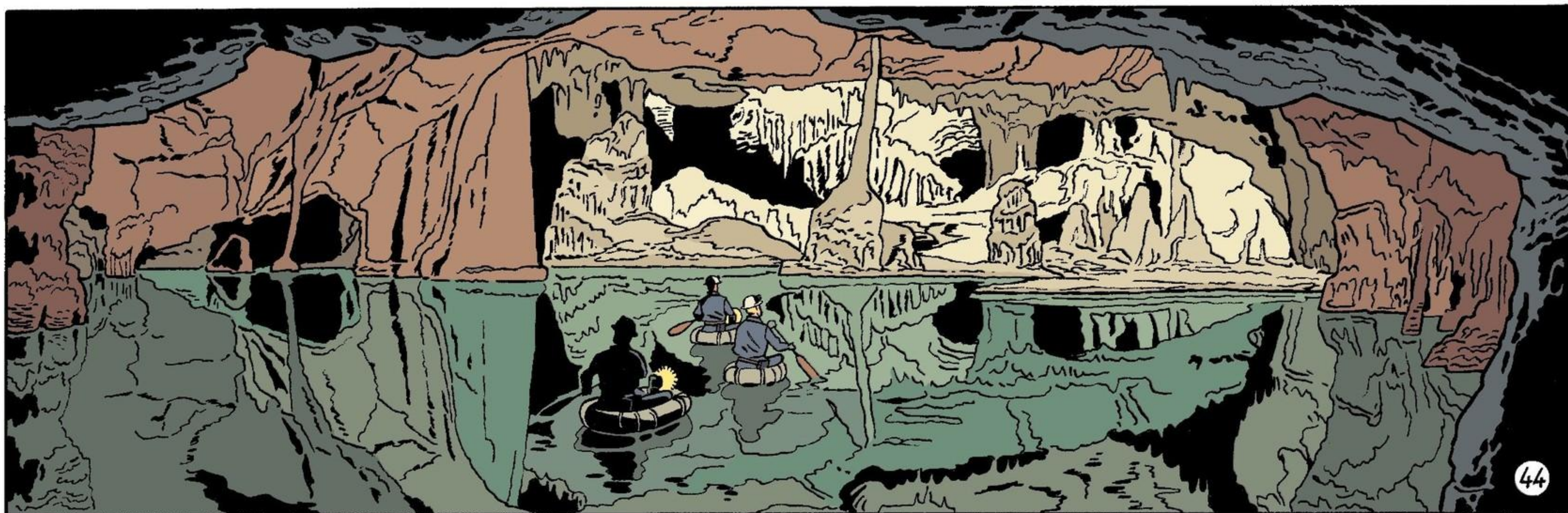


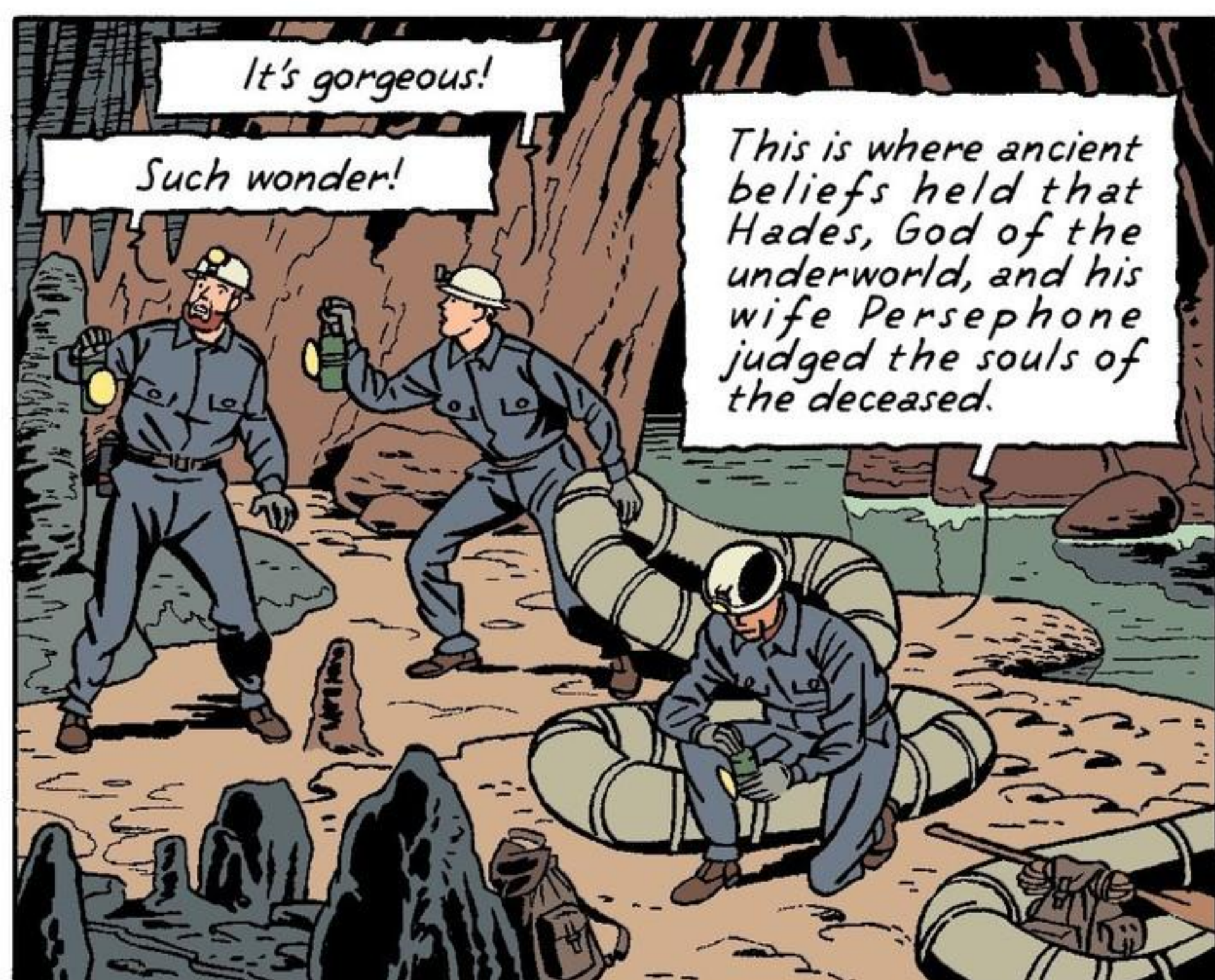
I must say, Greek mythology really is an inexhaustible source of extraordinary stories.

Like all mythologies, old chap. Not forgetting the Old Testament, which is chock full of epics and twists and turns as well.



We're almost there, gentlemen. Prepare to discover an incredible sight...

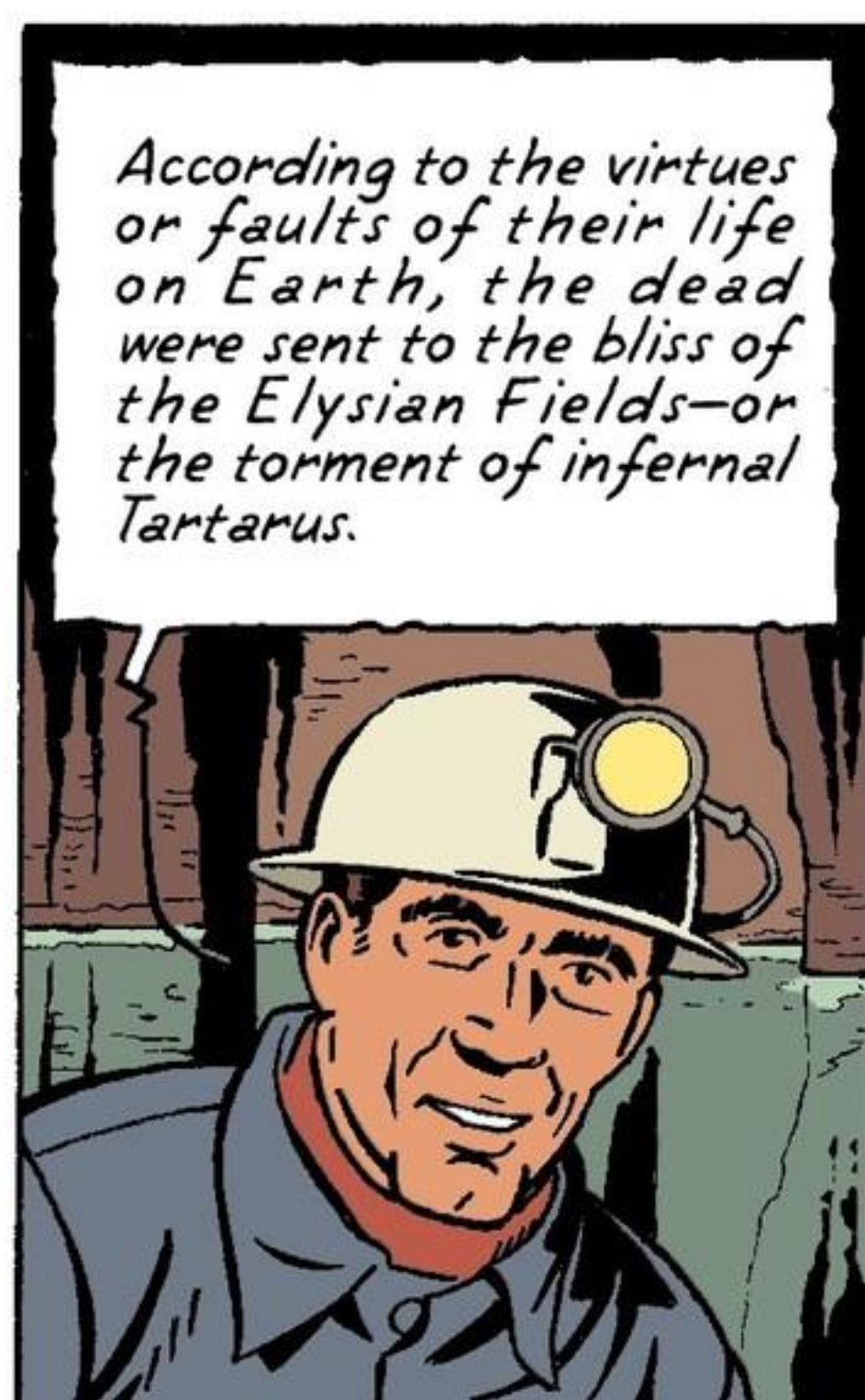




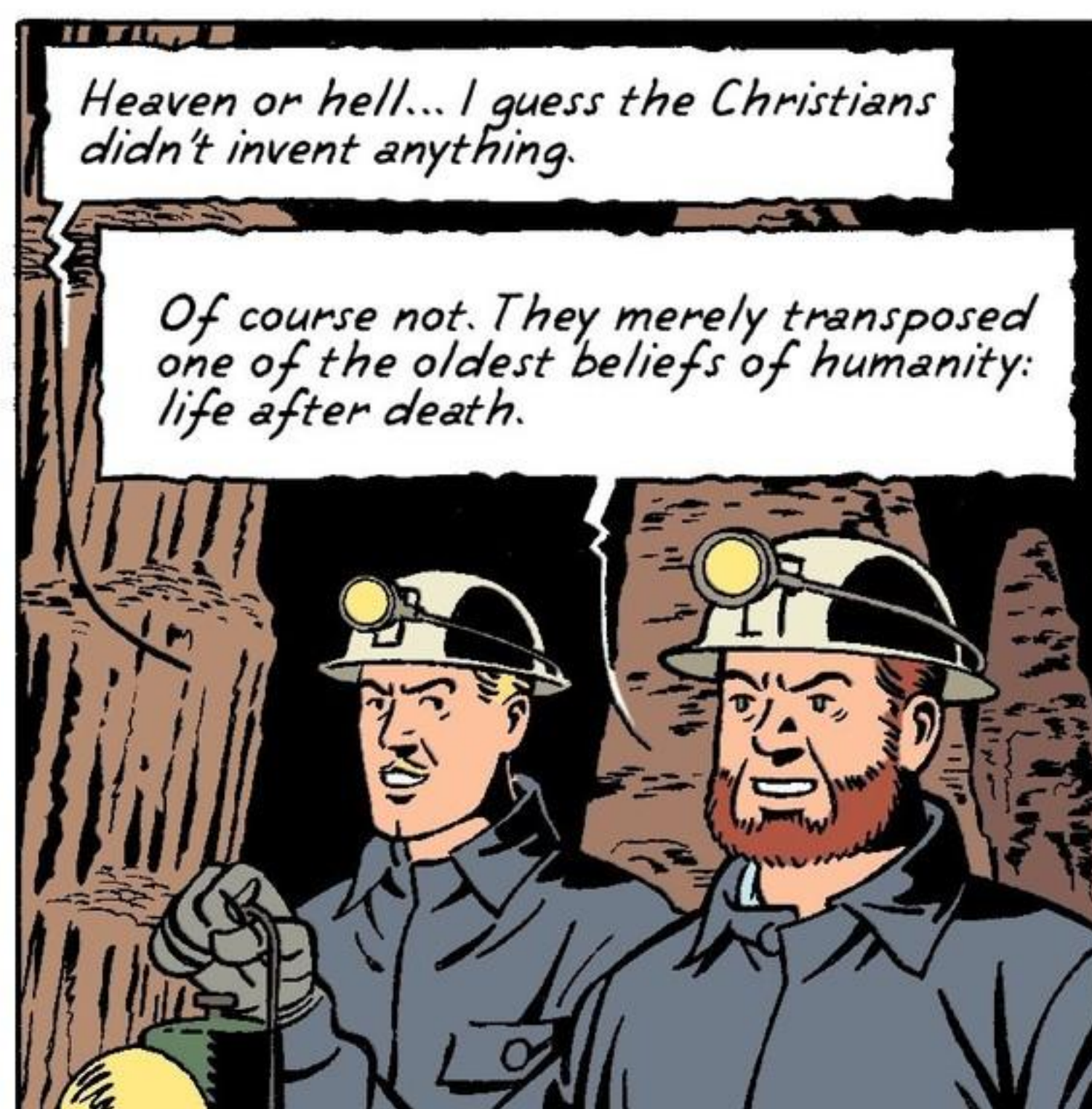
It's gorgeous!

Such wonder!

This is where ancient beliefs held that Hades, God of the underworld, and his wife Persephone judged the souls of the deceased.



According to the virtues or faults of their life on Earth, the dead were sent to the bliss of the Elysian Fields—or the torment of infernal Tartarus.



Heaven or hell... I guess the Christians didn't invent anything.

Of course not. They merely transposed one of the oldest beliefs of humanity: life after death.



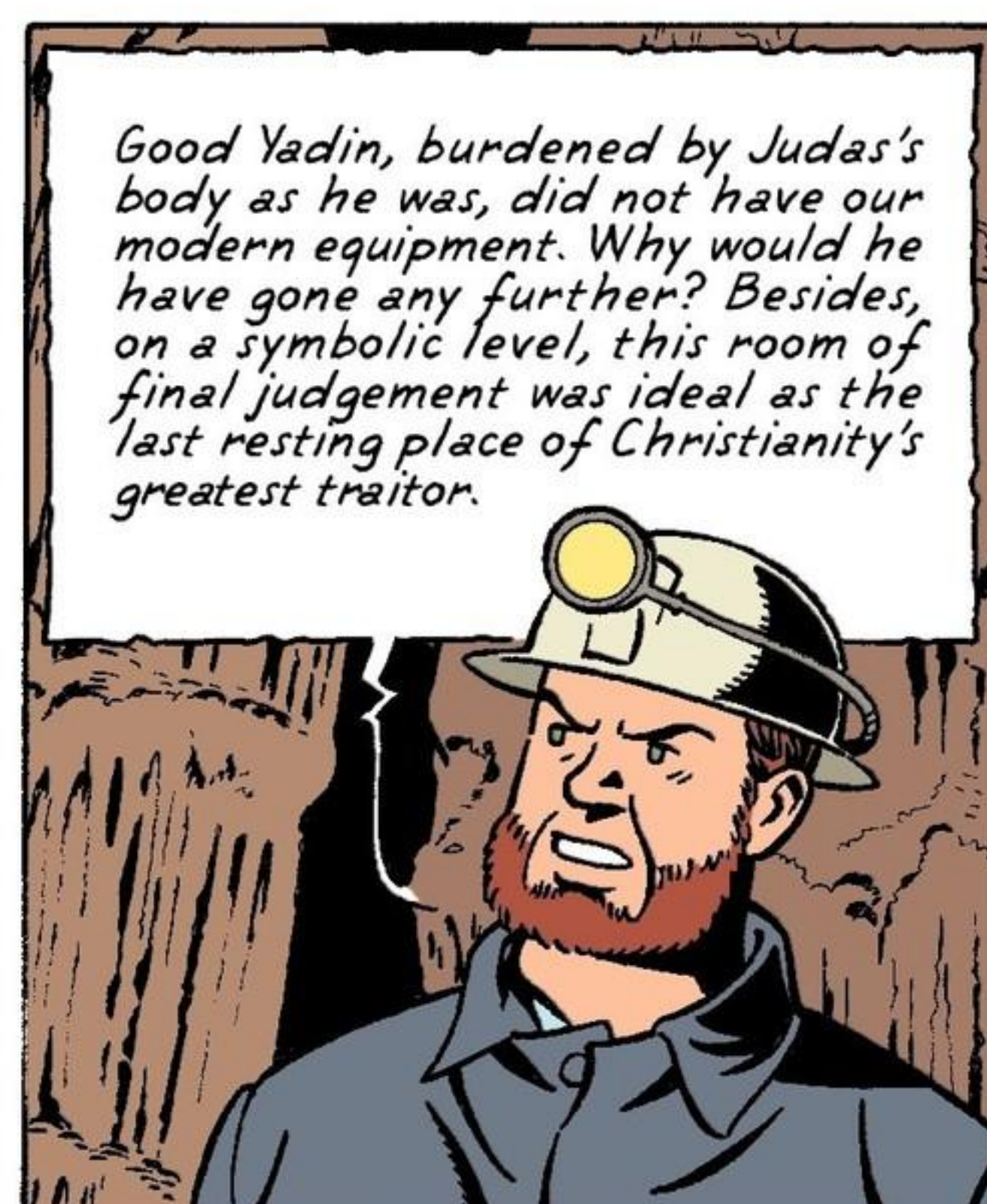
But let's get back to our goal: Eurydice's hair. What does this room lead to, Konstantinos?

To several galleries, some of which have been explored, others not.

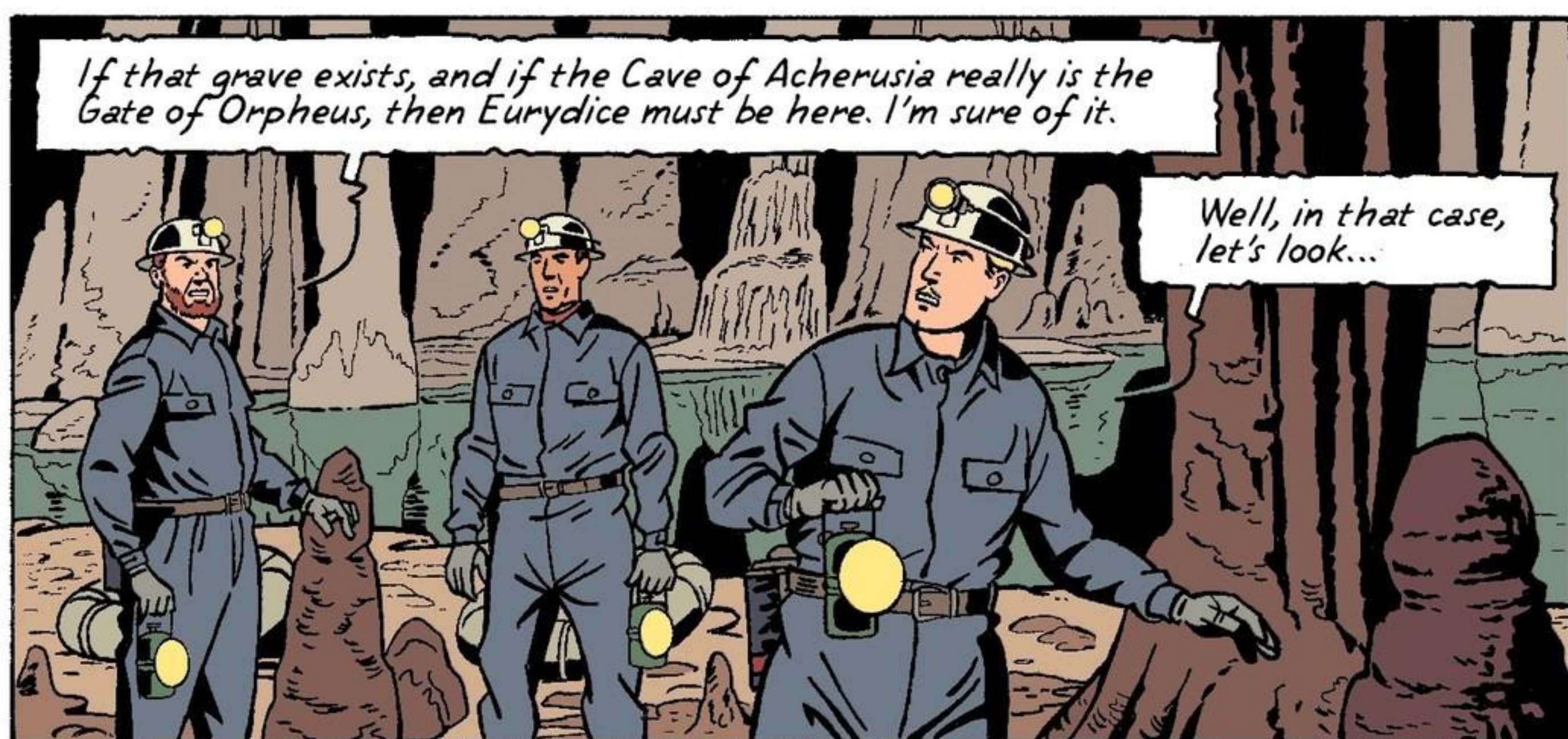


It could take us quite a while. It might be better if Konstantinos went back to get our equipment so we can set up camp here.

I have to disagree, Francis.



Good Yadin, burdened by Judas's body as he was, did not have our modern equipment. Why would he have gone any further? Besides, on a symbolic level, this room of final judgement was ideal as the last resting place of Christianity's greatest traitor.



If that grave exists, and if the Cave of Acherusia really is the Gate of Orpheus, then Eurydice must be here. I'm sure of it.

Well, in that case, let's look...



I've seen dragon heads, a giant hand and even something vaguely resembling a ship, but nothing that looks even remotely like a woman's head.

That's because we're going about this the wrong way, old chap.



FOR SEVERAL HOURS, THE TRIO SYSTEMATICALLY EXAMINES THE STALAGMITES AND OTHER MINERAL FORMATIONS THAT WATER, SEEPING FROM THE WALLS OF THE VAST UNDERGROUND ROOM, HAS CARVED OVER MILLIONS OF YEARS.

To light his way, Yadin only had a torch—and not the electric kind. But in caves such as this, shapes can change depending on the type of light shining on them. Let's make ourselves some old-fashioned torches and try again.

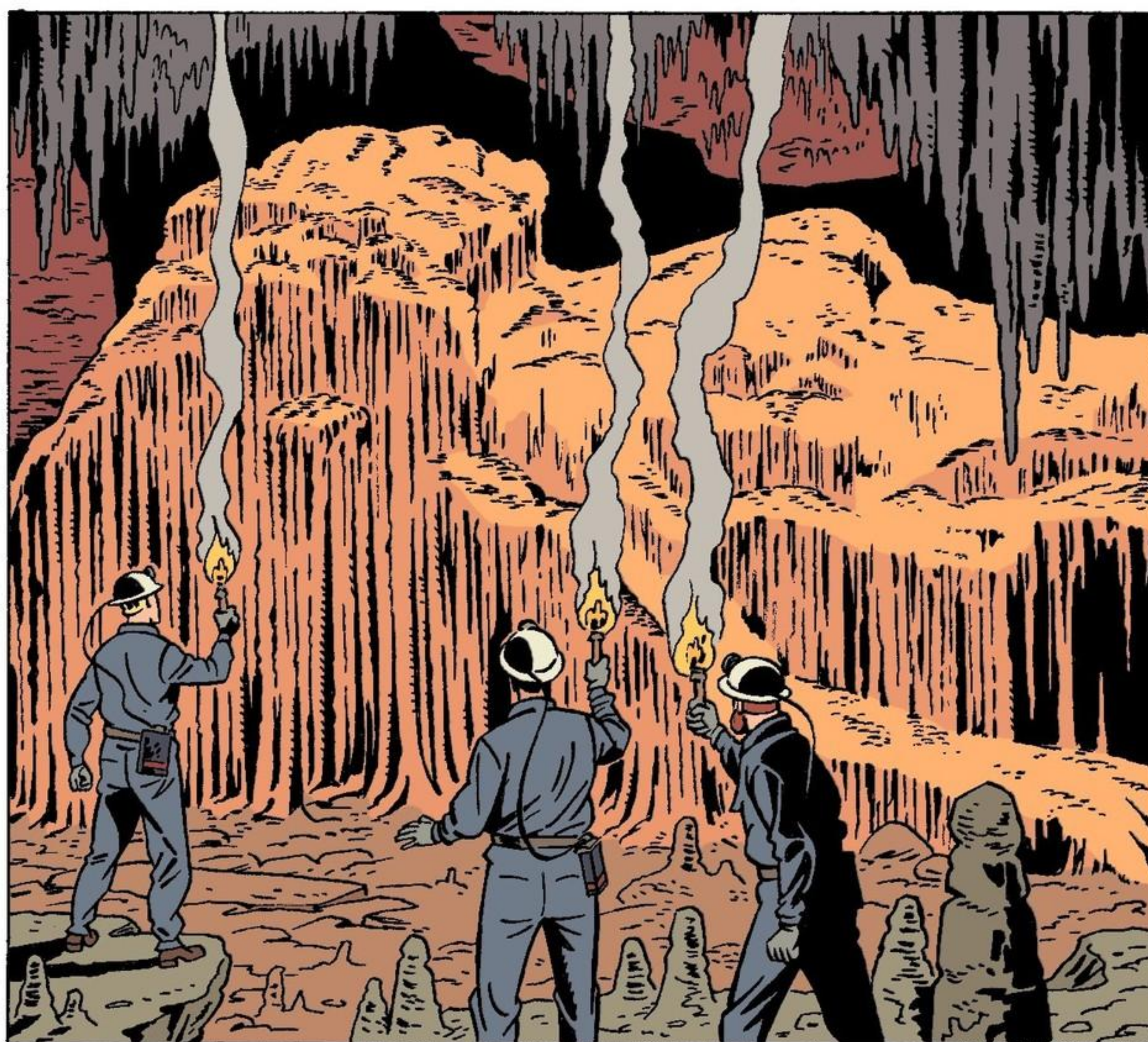


USING THEIR PADDLES, WRAPPED IN FABRIC AND SET ALIGHT, OUR FRIENDS RESUME THEIR SEARCH AFTER TURNING OFF THEIR MINERS' LAMPS.



AND SUDDENLY...

Philip!
Konstantinos!
Look at this!...



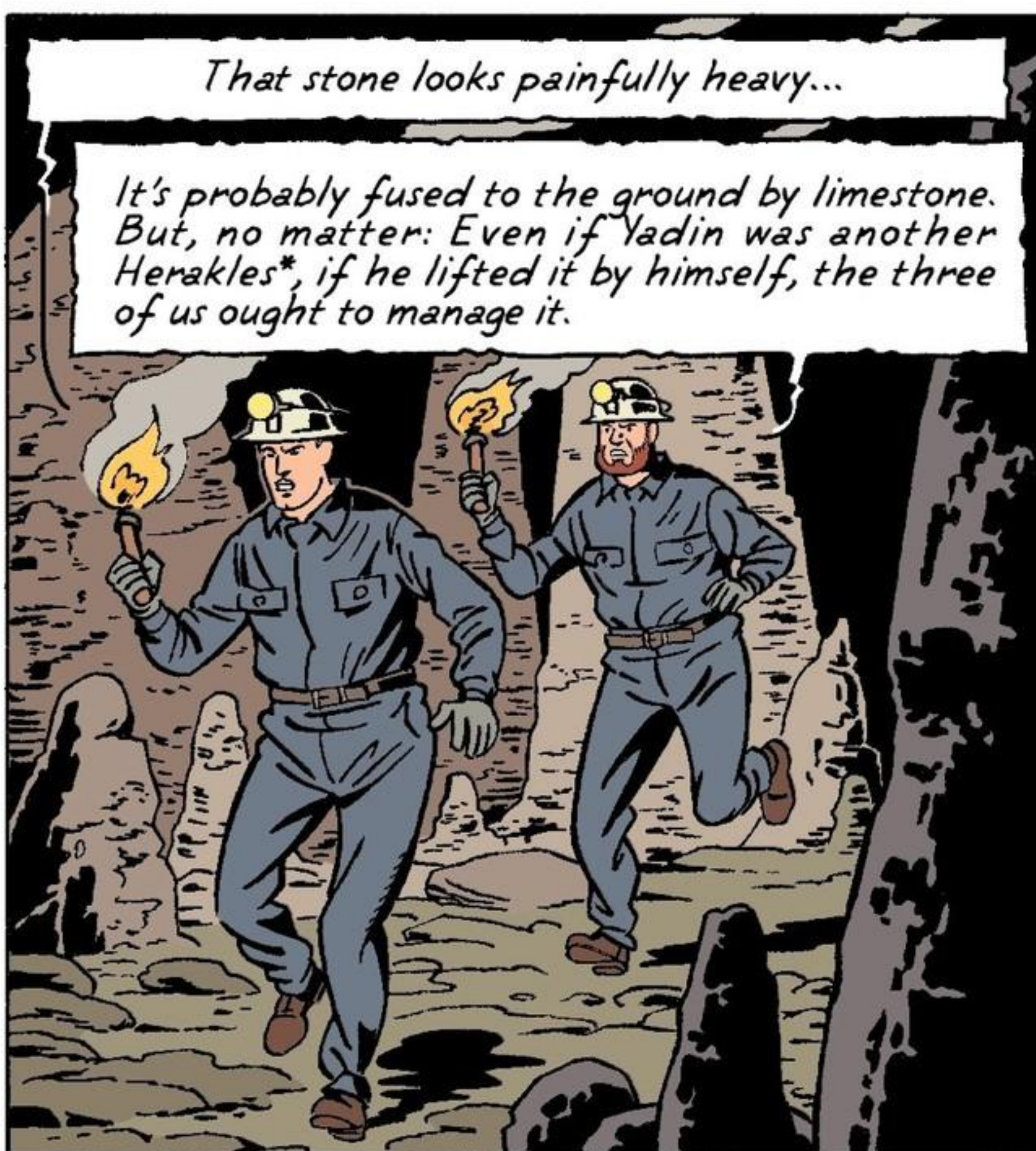
There, below her hair, that great slab of rough stone!...

Quick—let's go get our lamps, our picks...



That stone looks painfully heavy...

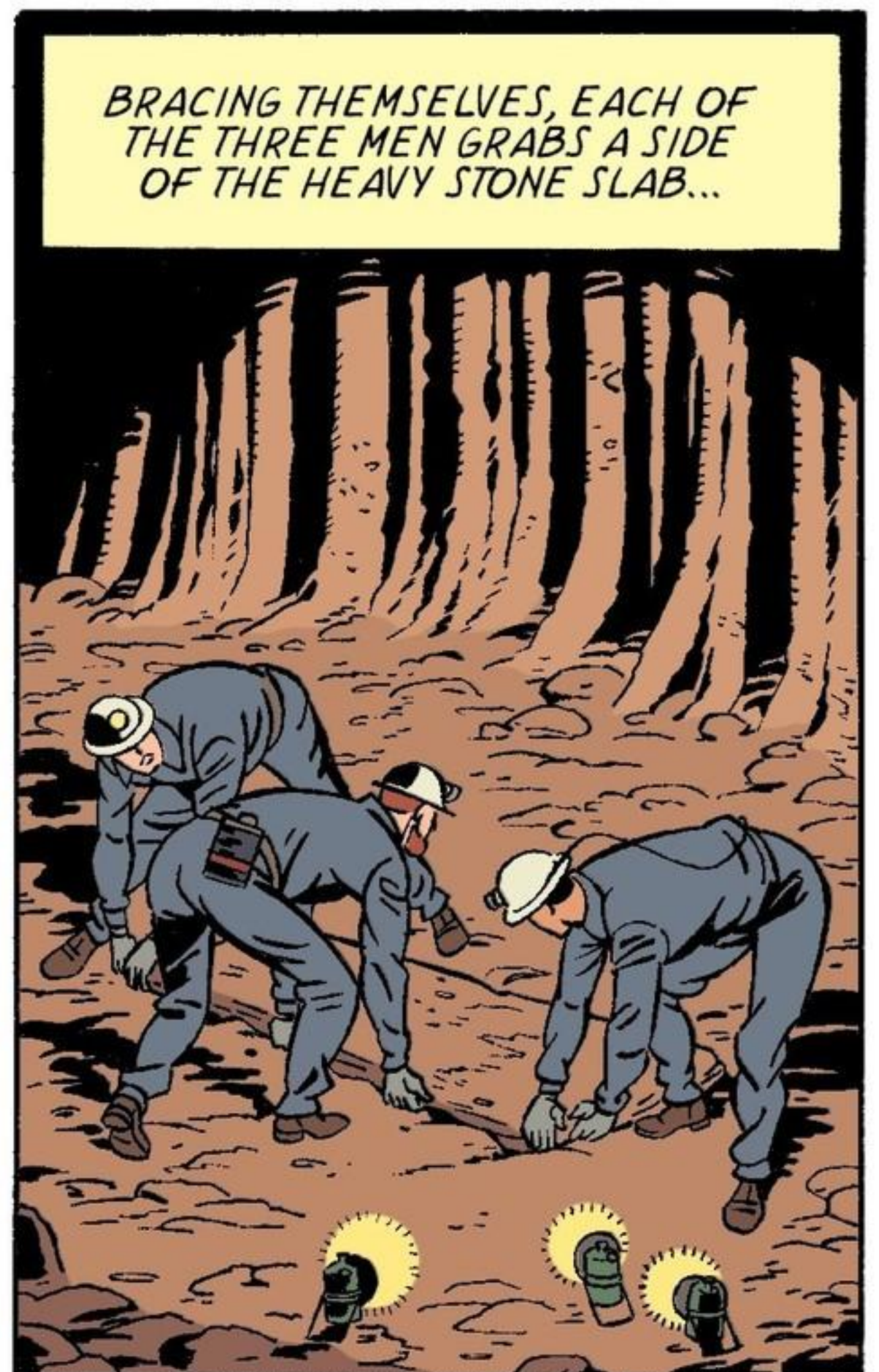
It's probably fused to the ground by limestone. But, no matter: Even if Yadin was another Herakles*, if he lifted it by himself, the three of us ought to manage it.



Oh, Francis, I can't believe it... Look at this: My hands are shaking.



*GREEK NAME OF A DEMI-GOD HERO, SON OF ZEUS, BETTER KNOWN BY HIS LATIN NAME "HERCULES"



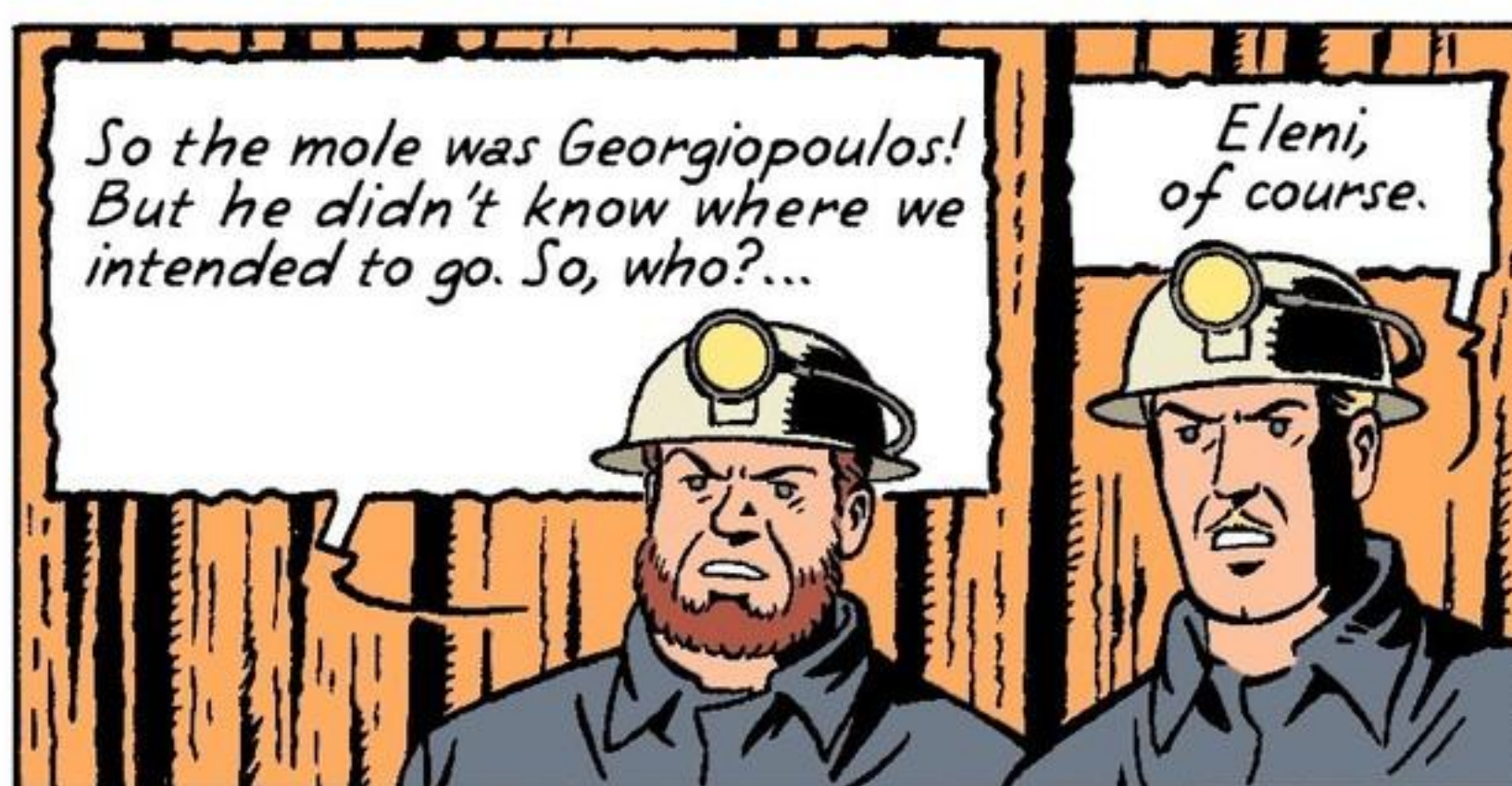


The good Dr Markopoulos eventually gave us the combination to his safe. And now, I finally have in my possession this reliquary, and the denarius it has held for 19 centuries.

Von Stahl!!!...
Olrik!!!...



We've been here for several days but couldn't locate the grave. So, when my friend Colonel Georgiopoulos warned me that you'd left Athens, I deemed it simpler just to wait for you. You've proven yourself quite resourceful, Professor. My compliments.



So the mole was Georgiopoulos! But he didn't know where we intended to go. So, who?...

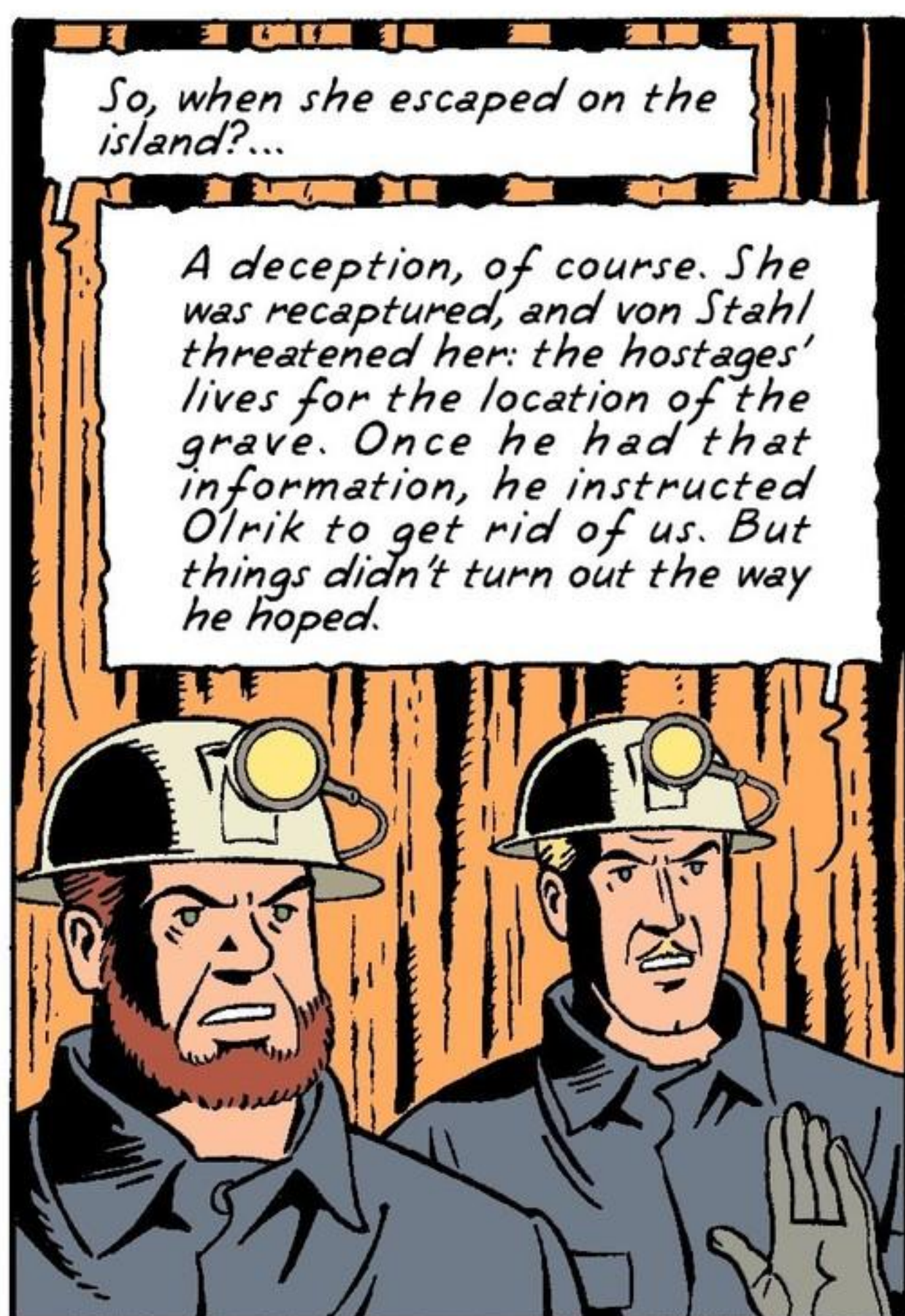
Eleni, of course.



I had my first suspicions after her phone call to a so-called friend from Syrenios. Suspicions that were confirmed by Olrik's "mysterious" escape from our English tourists' yacht before we reached the Piræus.



She was the only one aboard who had a motive to free Olrik. She had to protect the lives of her uncle and her fiancé. Isn't that right, Eleni?



So, when she escaped on the island?...

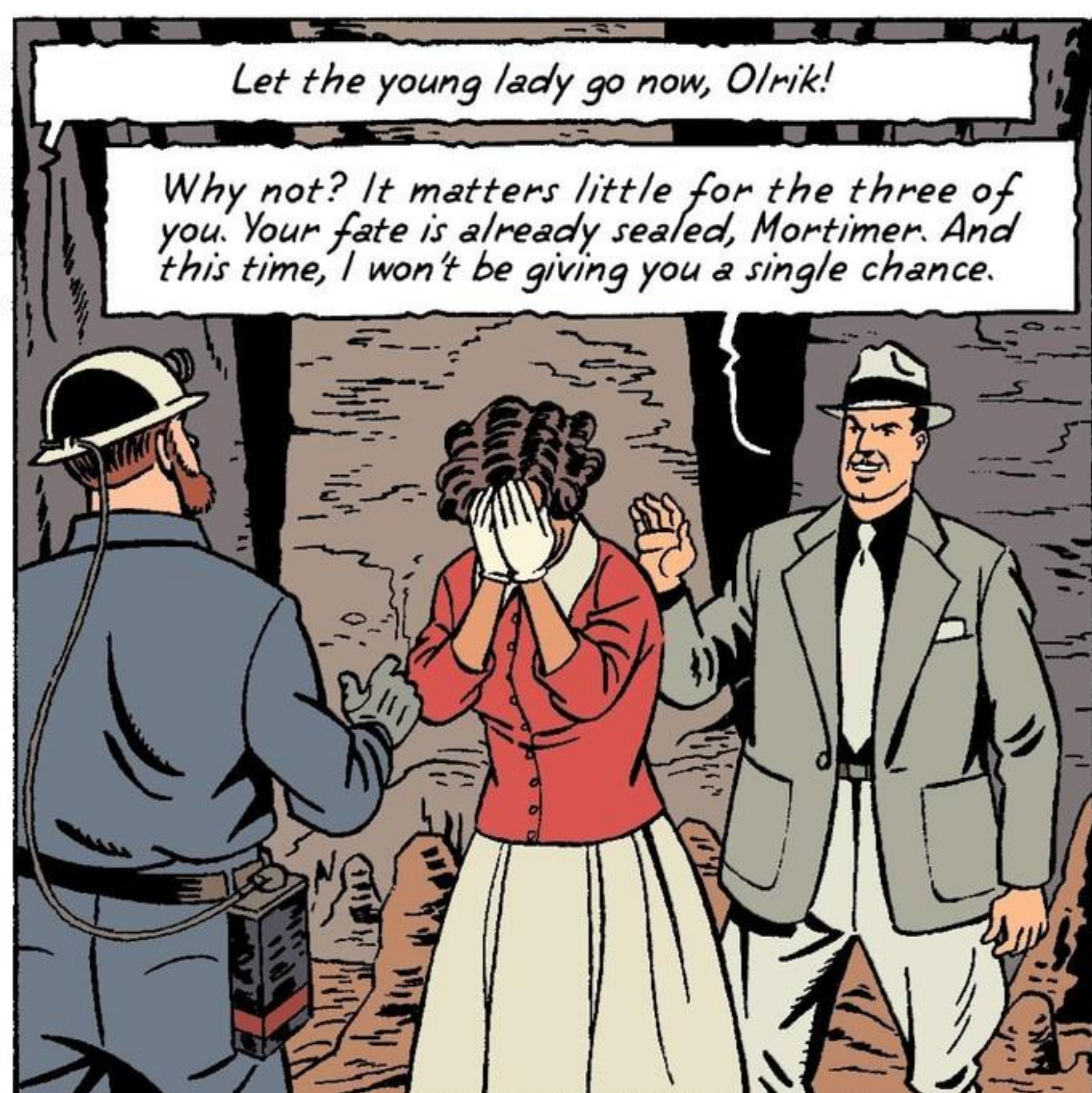
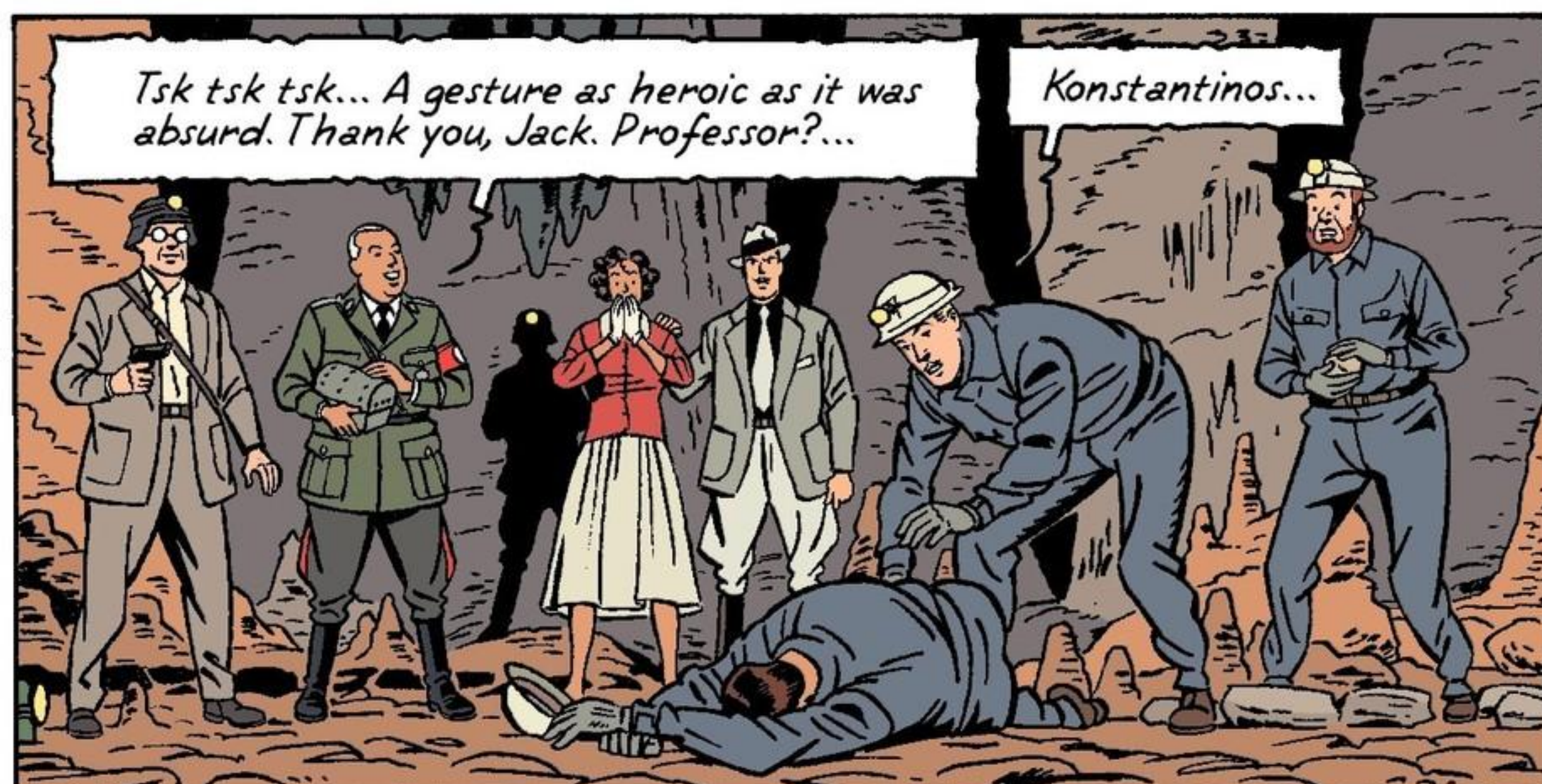
A deception, of course. She was recaptured, and von Stahl threatened her: the hostages' lives for the location of the grave. Once he had that information, he instructed Olrik to get rid of us. But things didn't turn out the way he hoped.

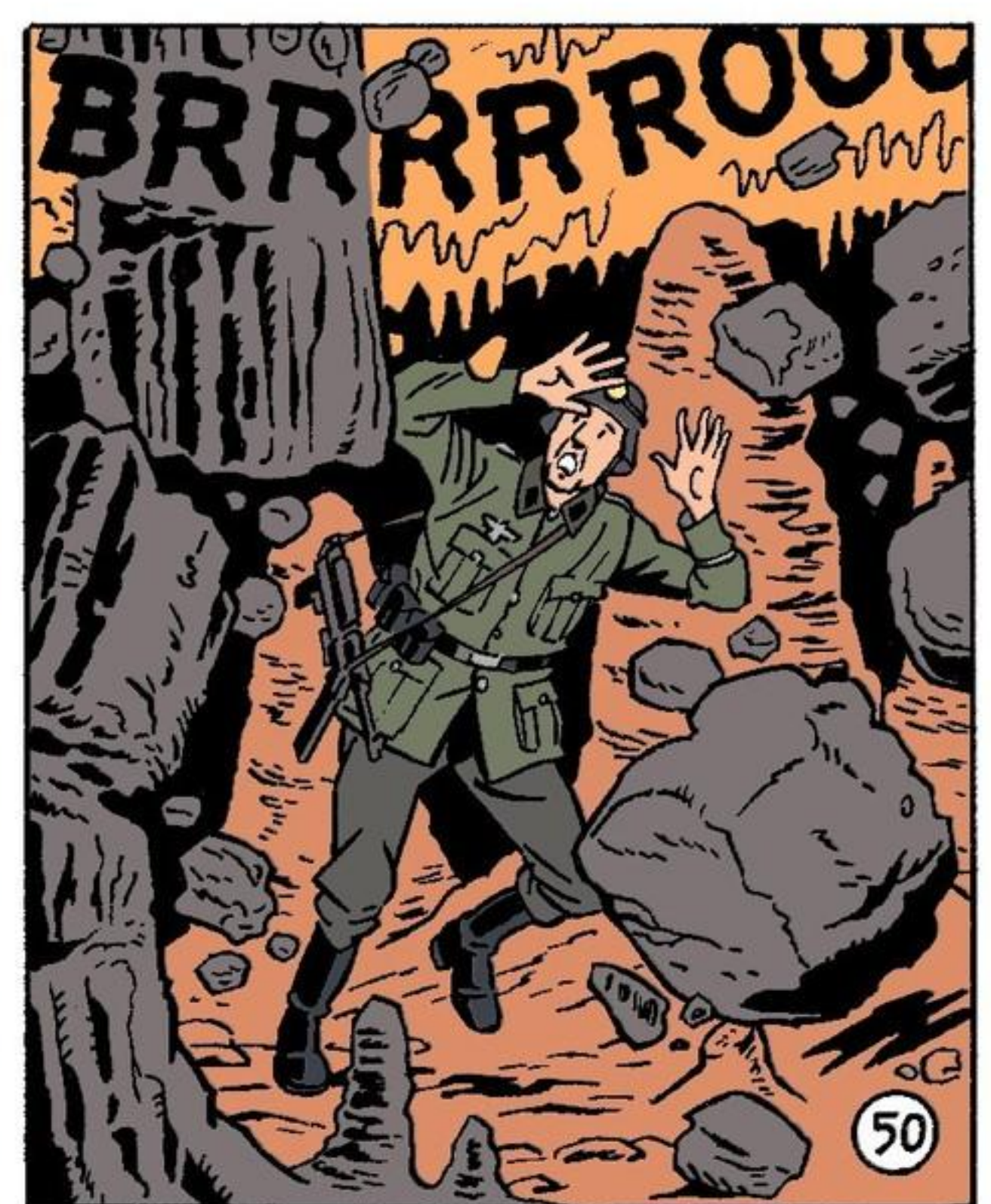


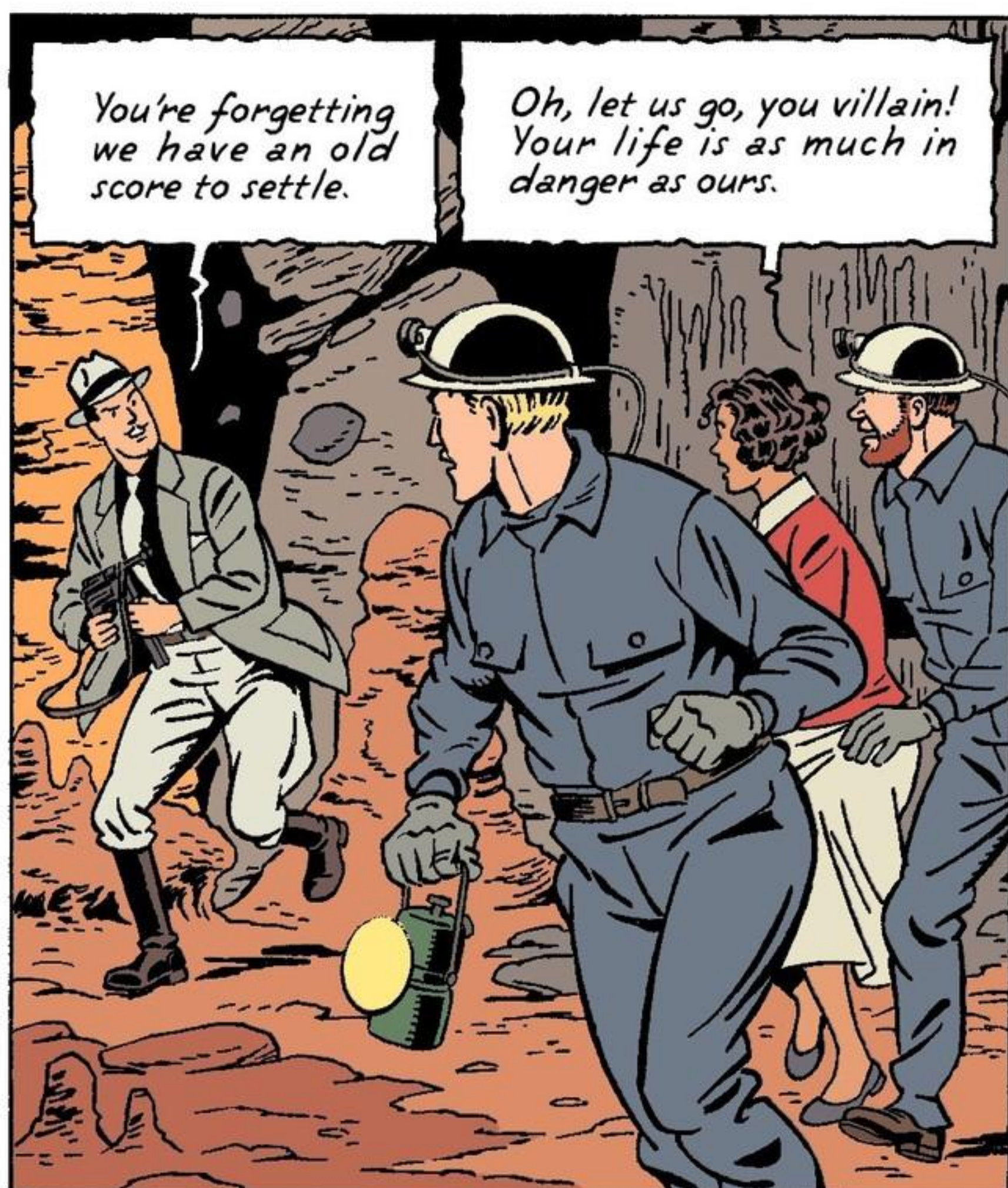
And they'll keep going wrong for you, Count Rainer von Stahl. After the Embassy meeting the other night in Athens, I set up a secret plan with my colleague, Commander Steele. Twenty men from M16 are waiting for you outside this cave. As for the submarine that brought you here, it's currently being chased by a destroyer of the Greek Navy.

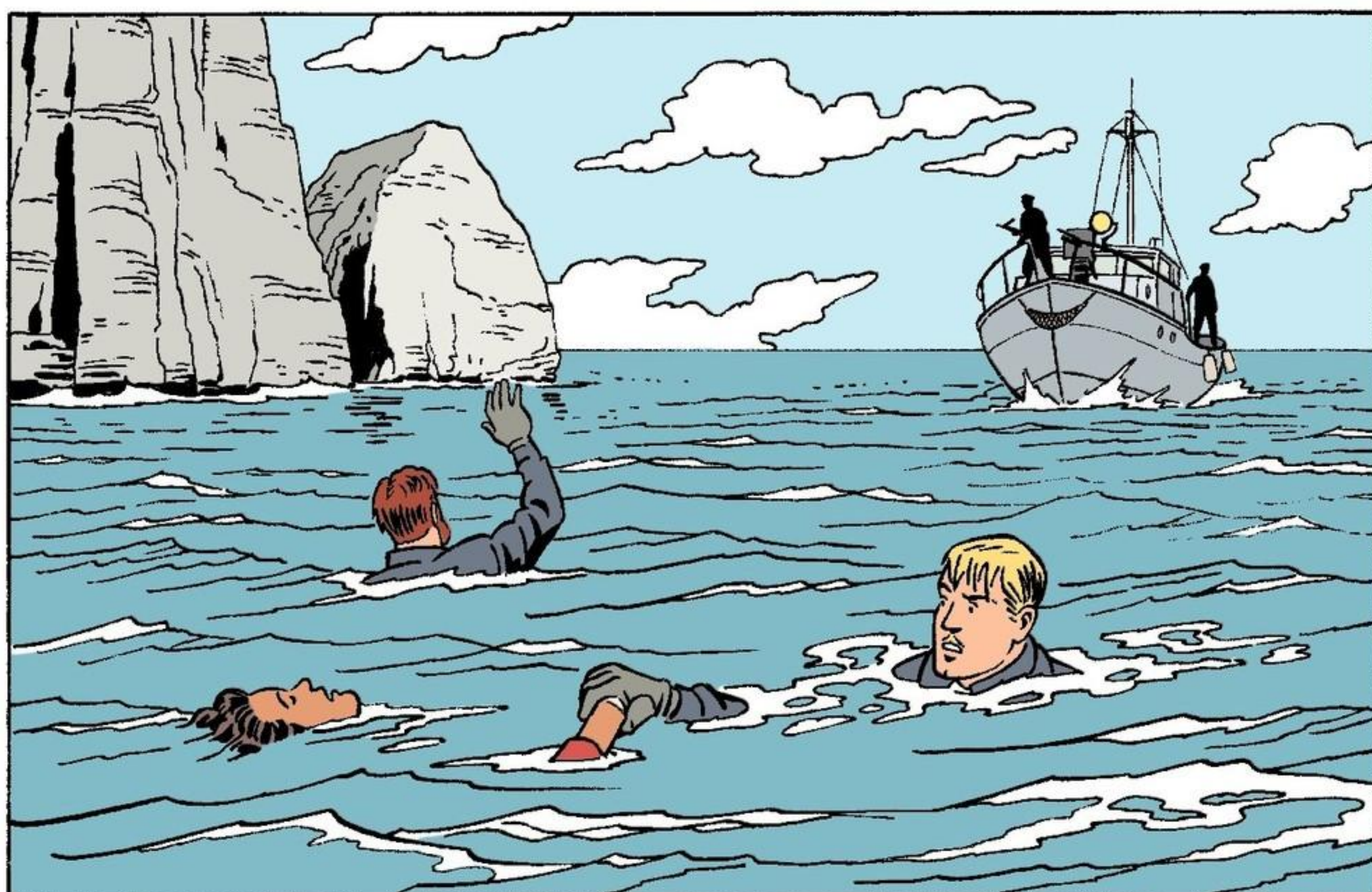
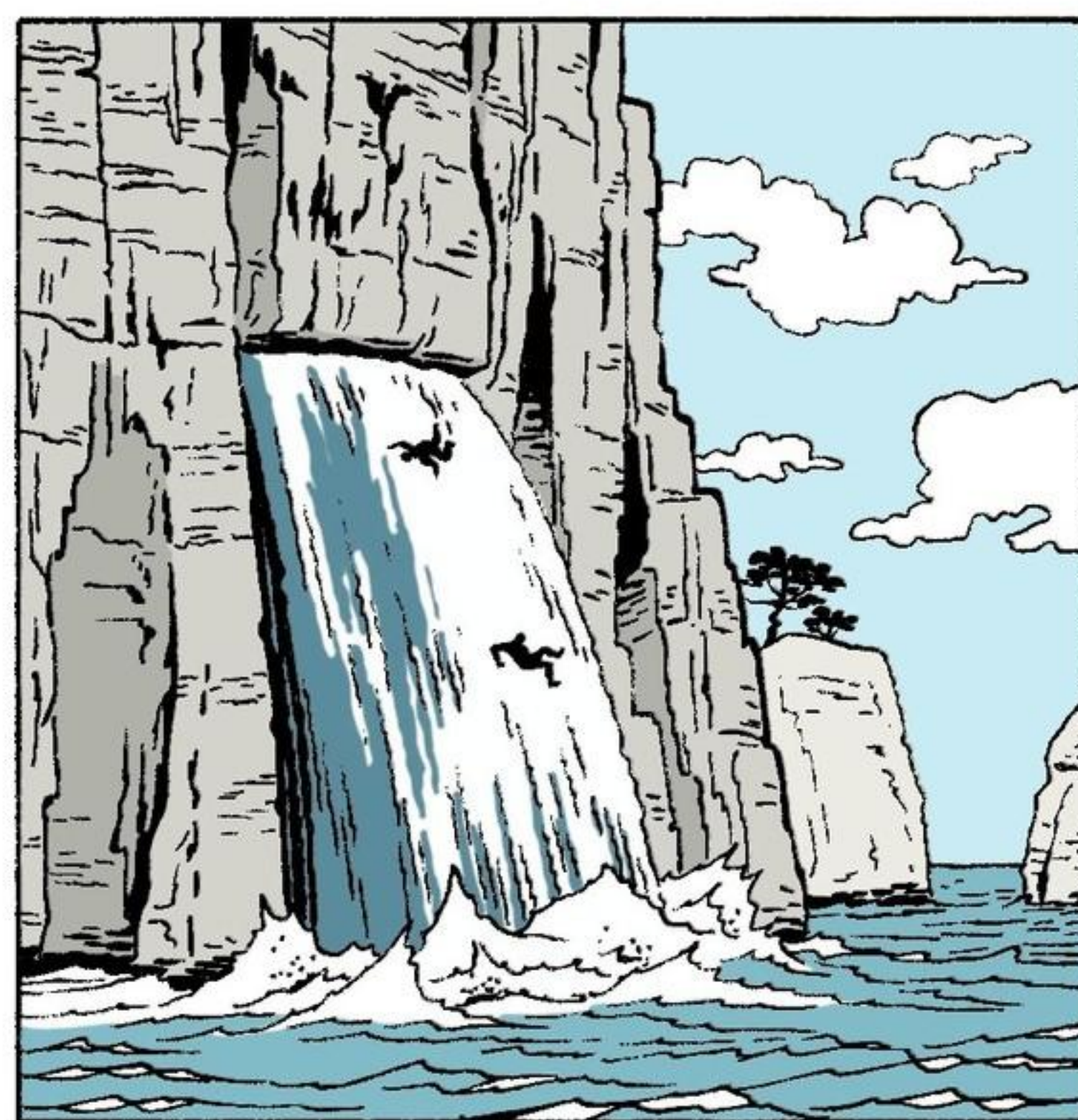
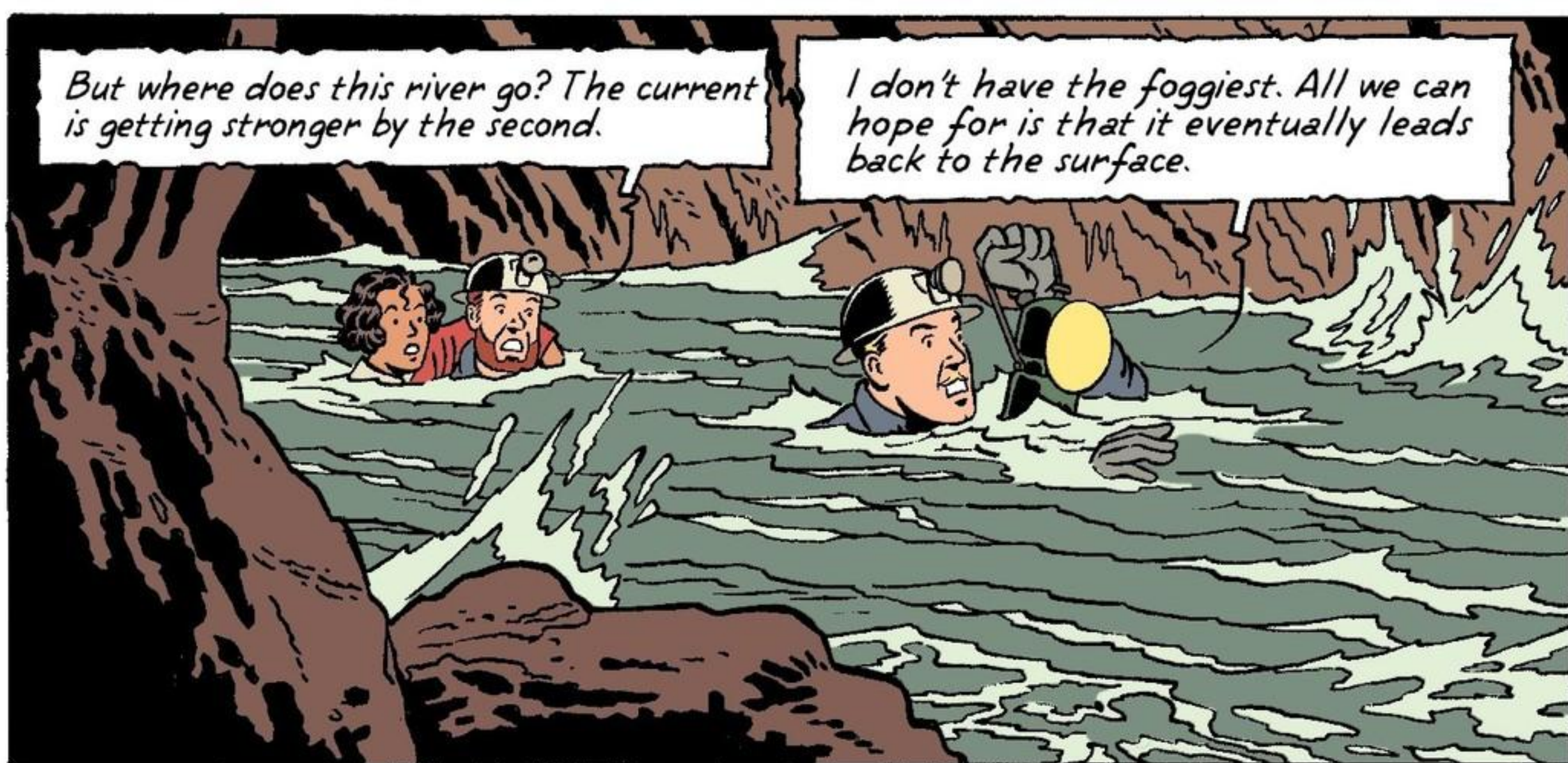


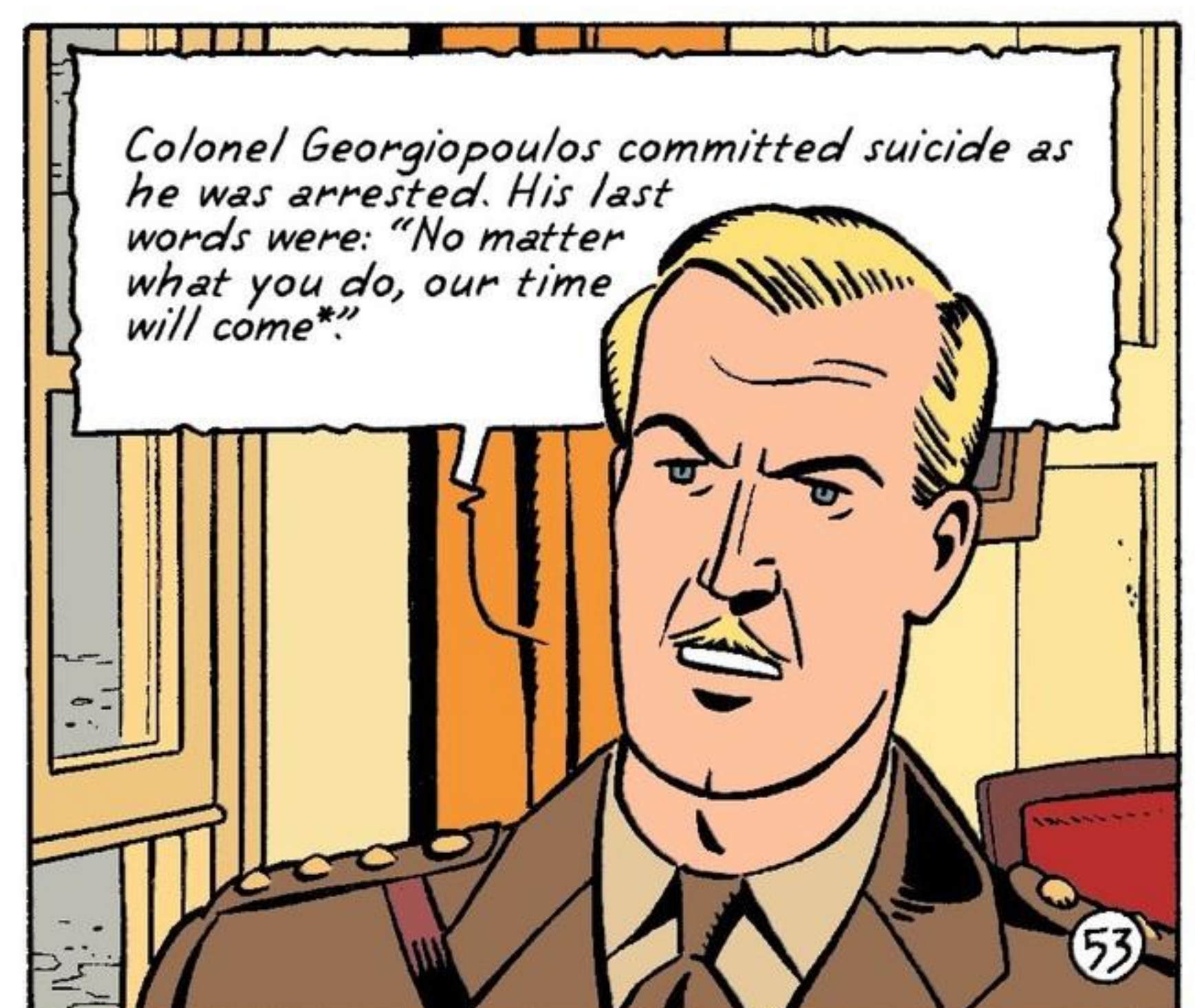
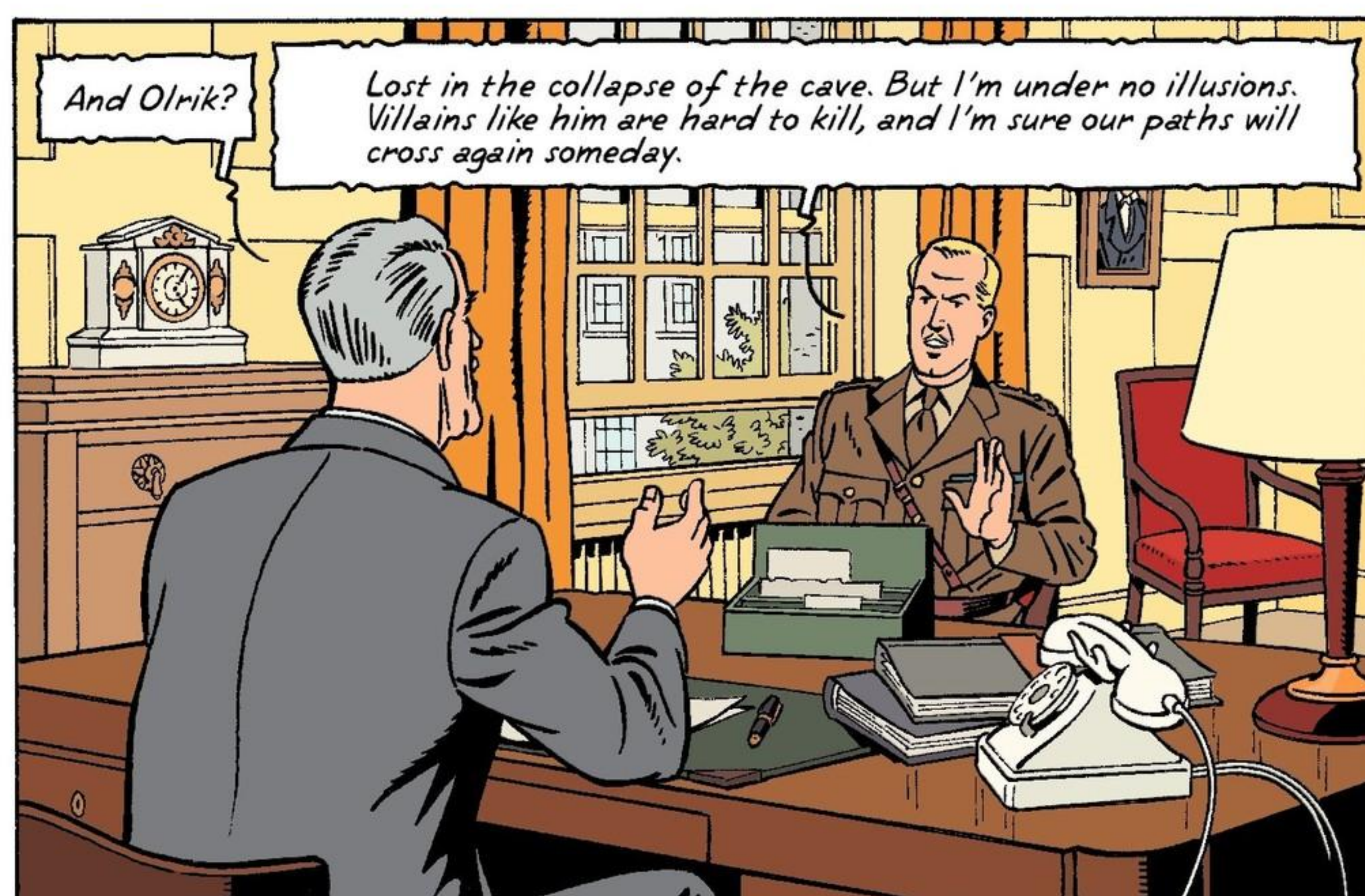
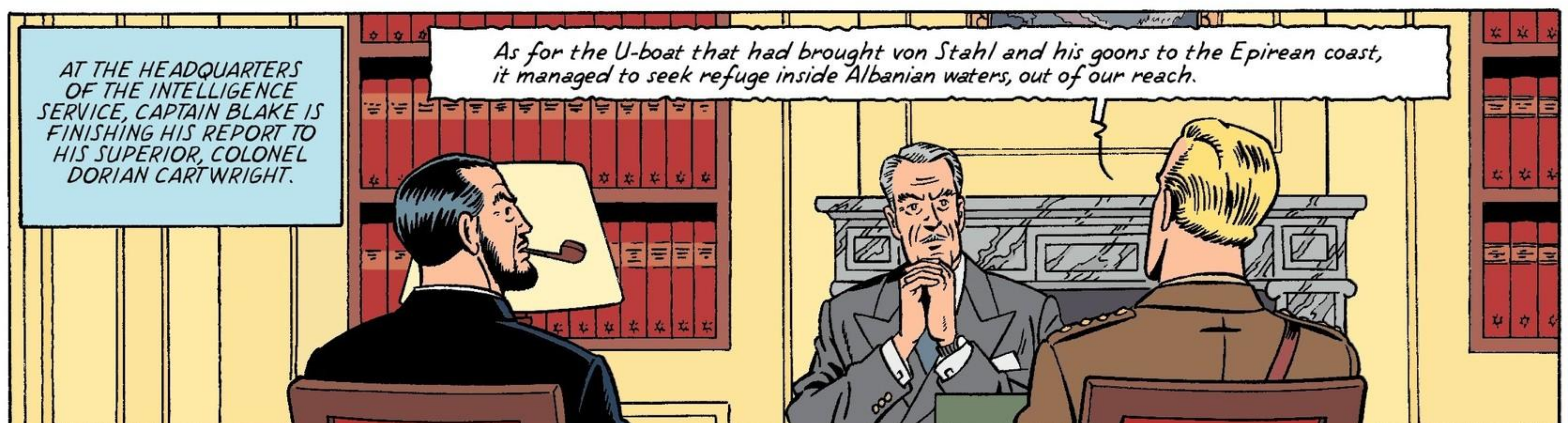
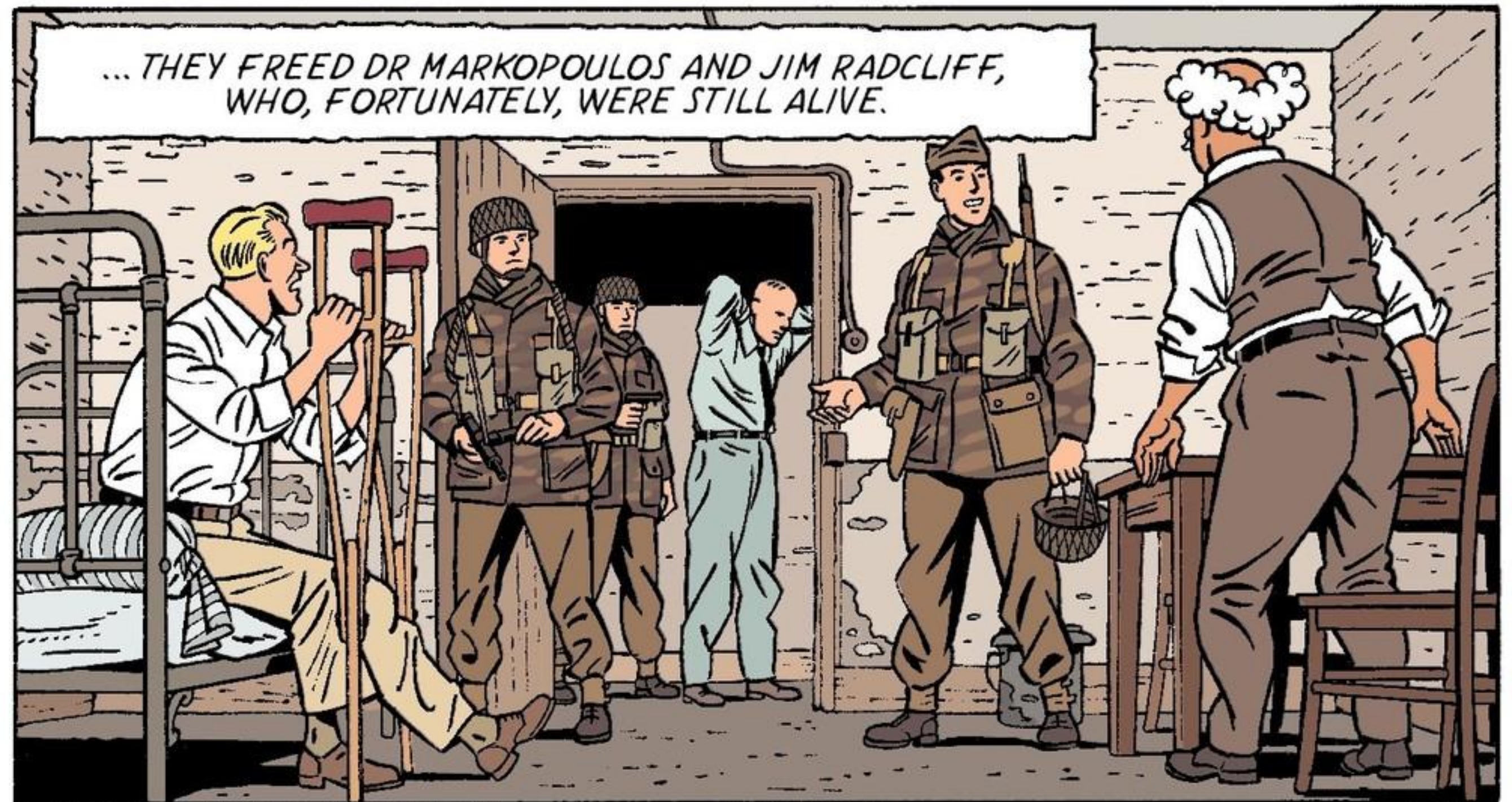
Amusing. I believe I'm as good a poker player as you are, Captain Blake. I know when my opponent is trying to bluff—as you're obviously doing now. But enough wasting time. Professor Mortimer, please hand over that purse.



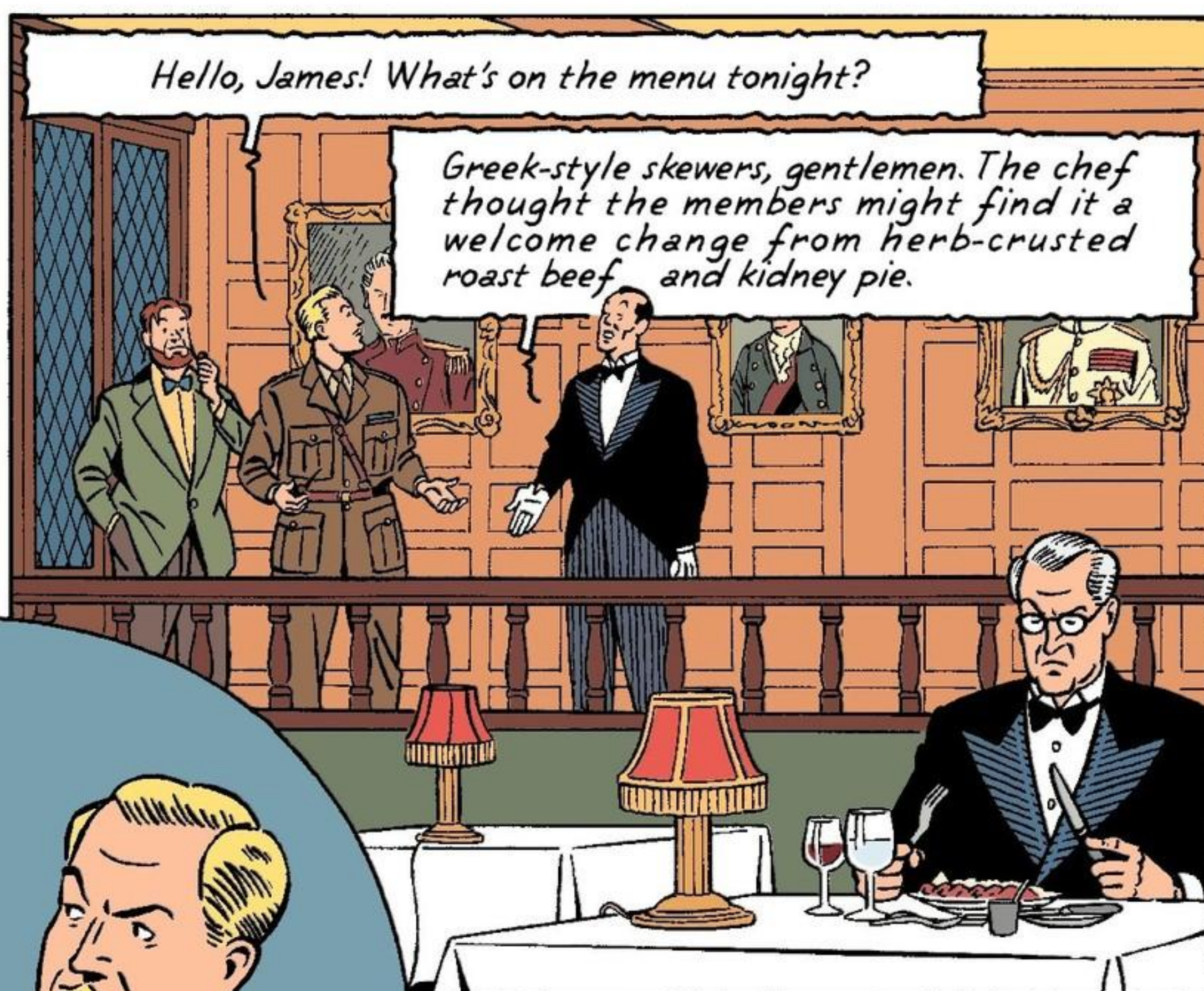
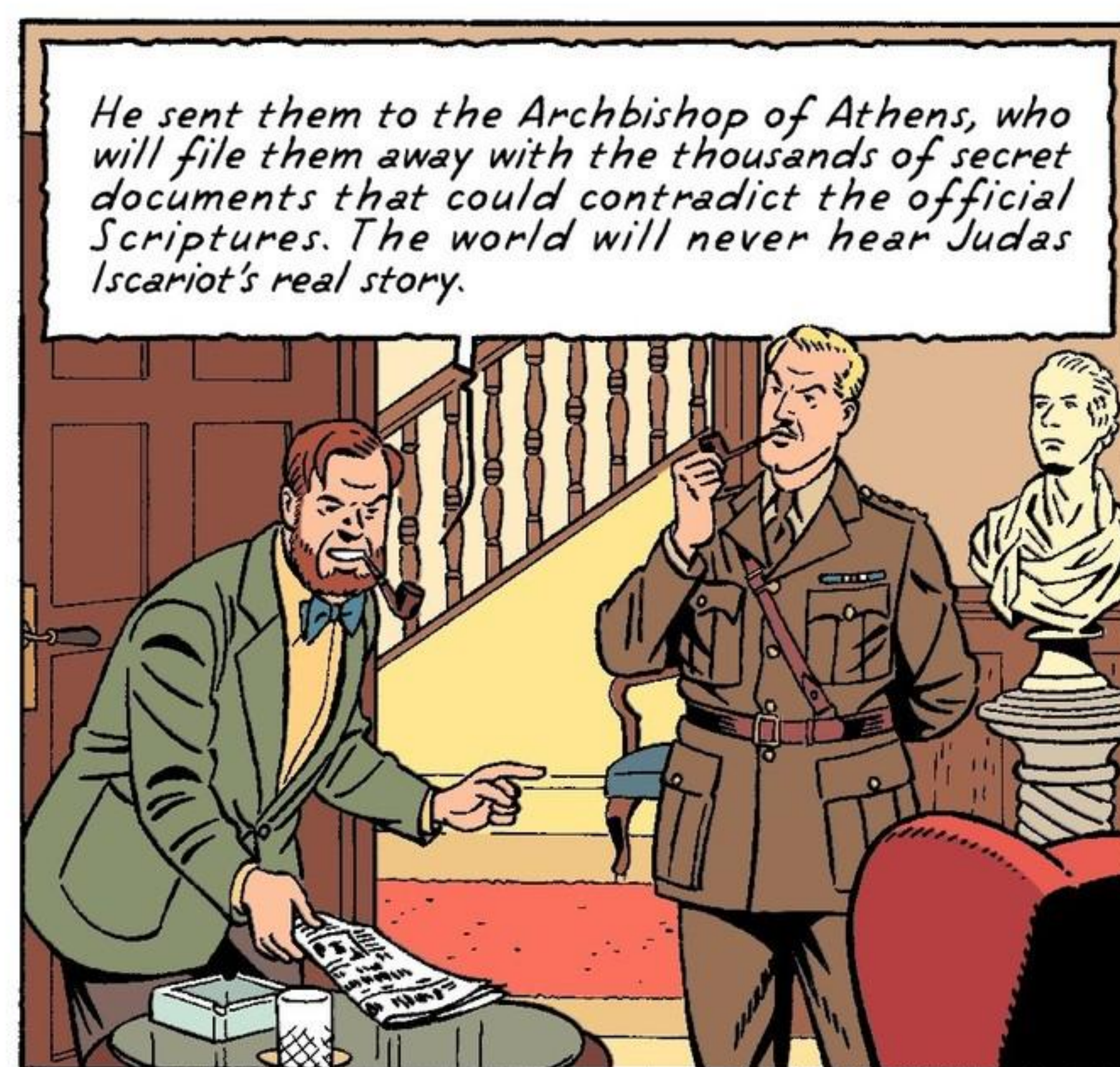
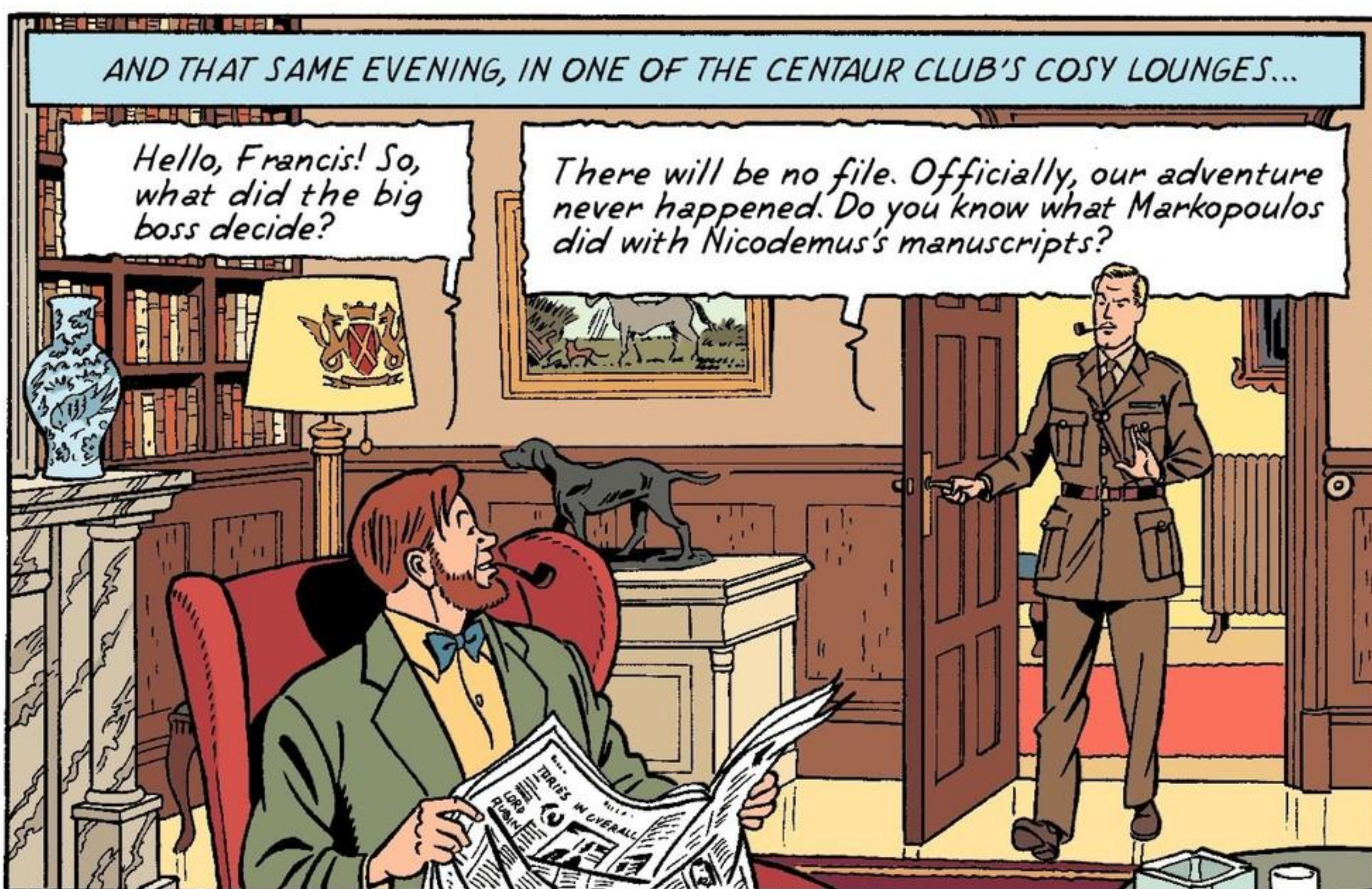
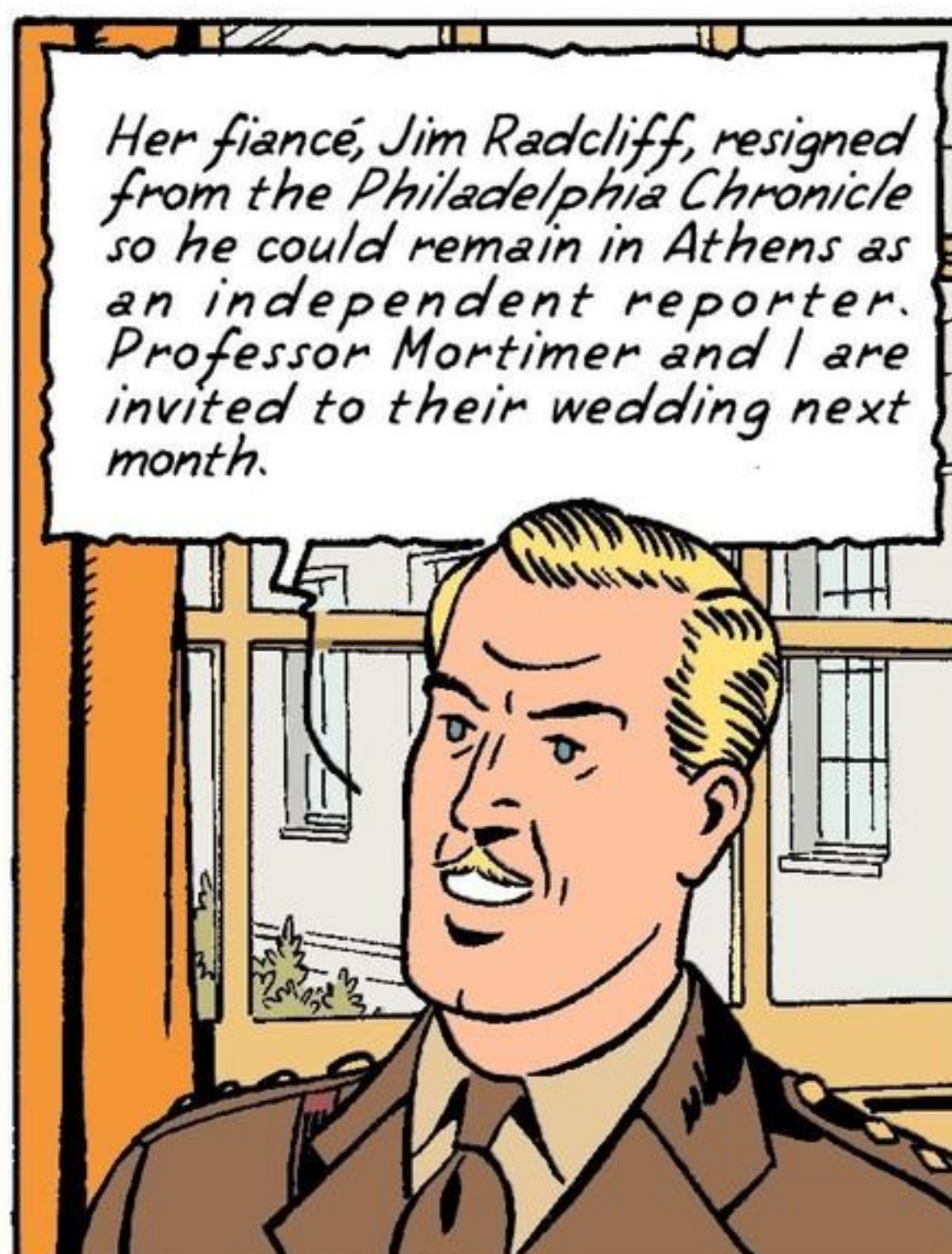
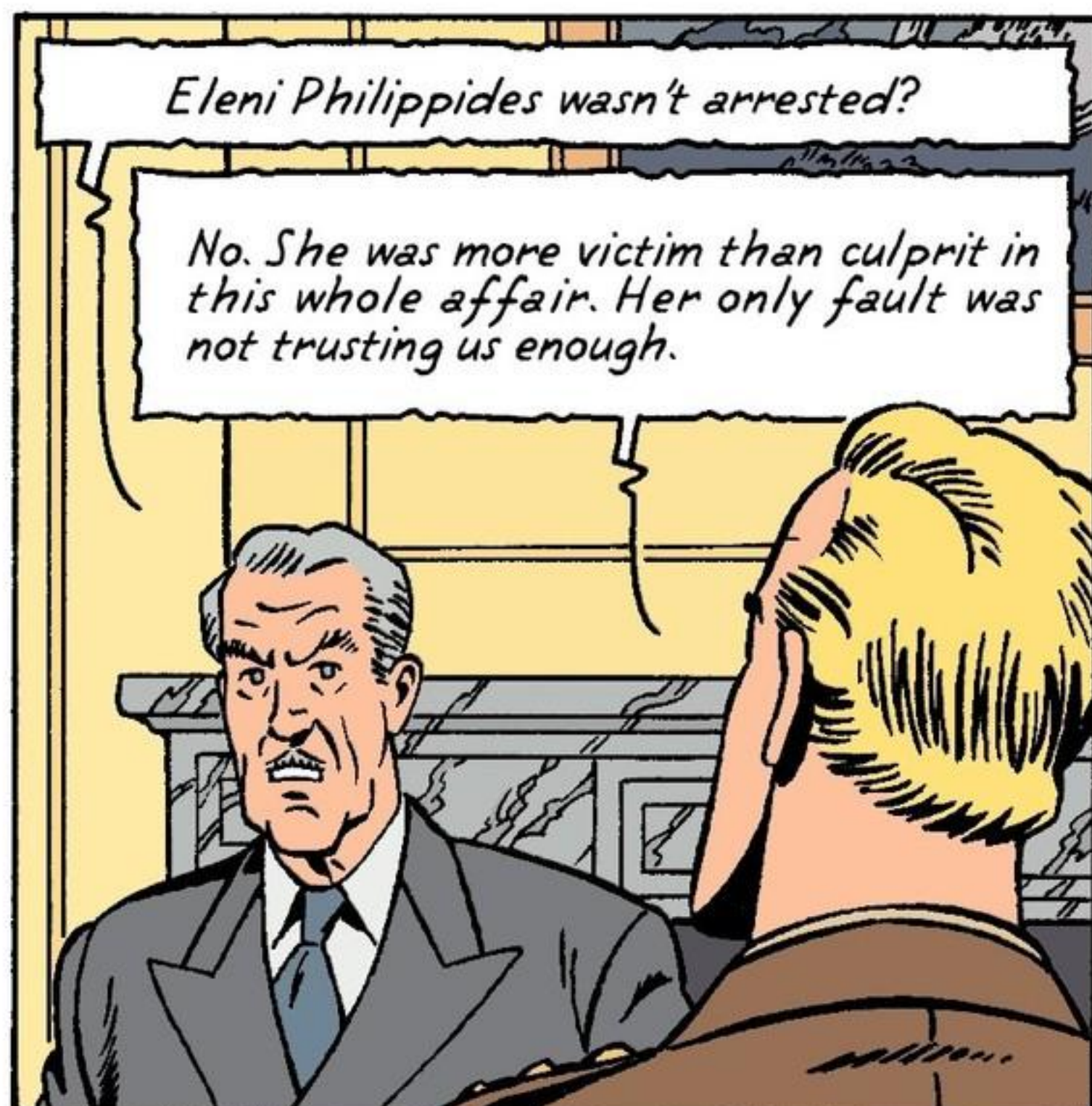








*AN OMINOUS PREDICTION THAT WOULD COME TRUE 12 YEARS LATER, IN 1967, WHEN A JUNTA OF OFFICERS PUT IN PLACE THE "REGIME OF THE COLONELS" A DICTATORSHIP THAT BROUGHT BLOODSHED TO GREECE UNTIL 1974.



**THE
END**

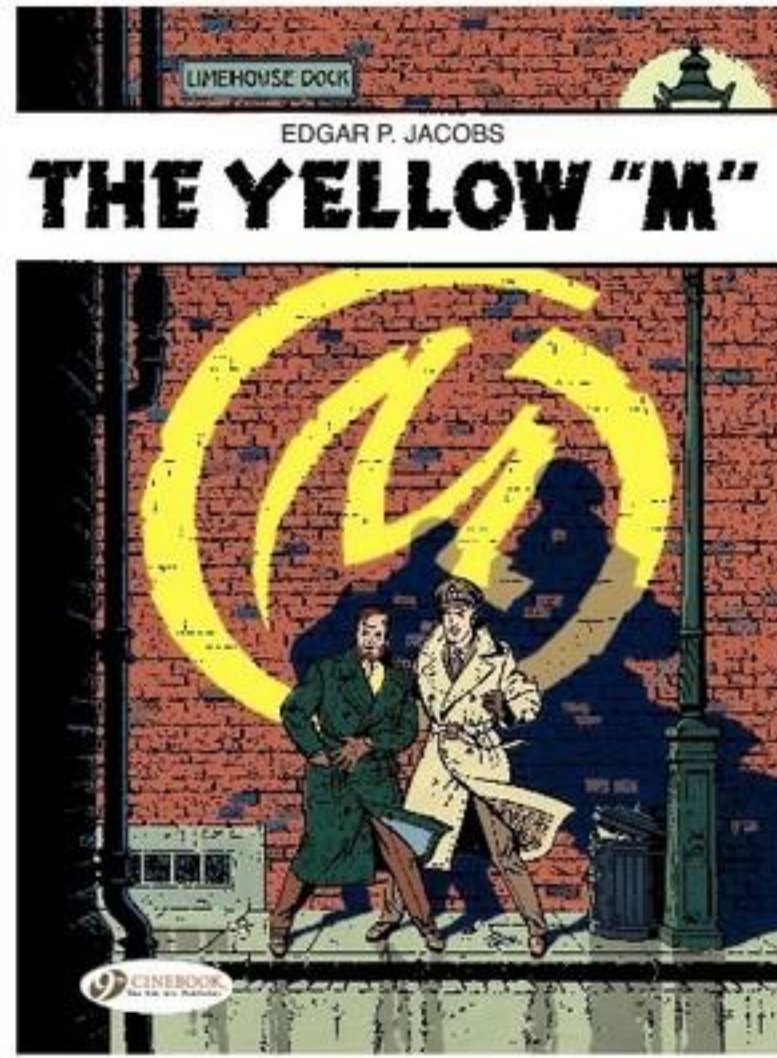


**THE
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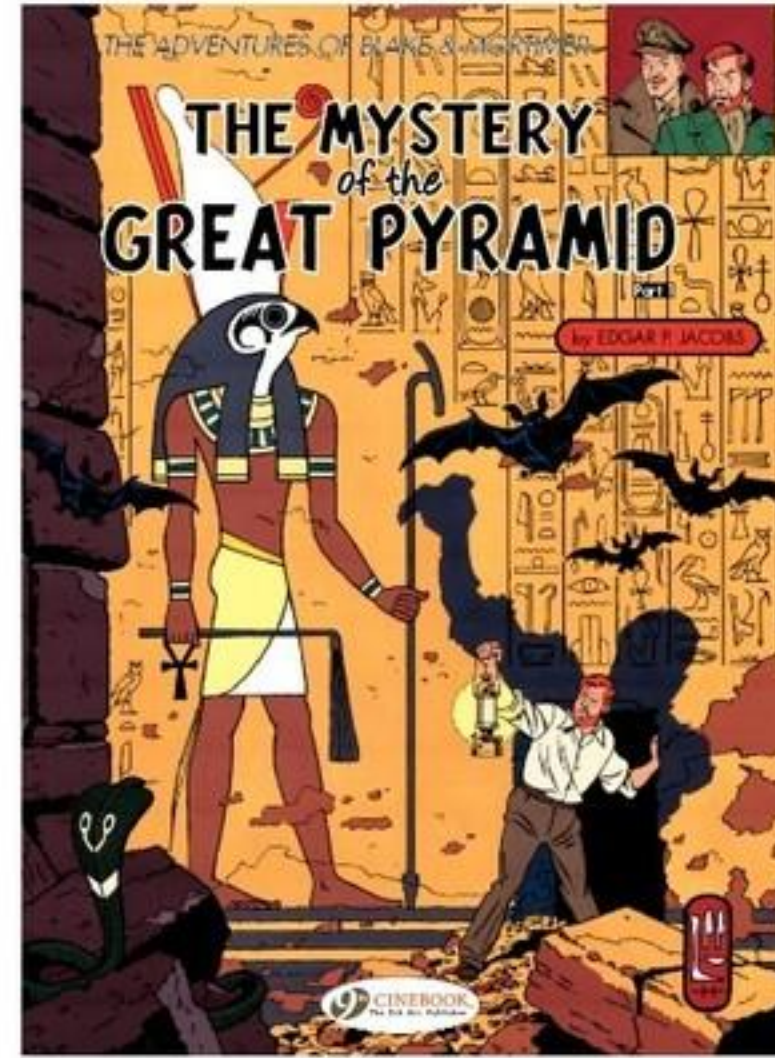




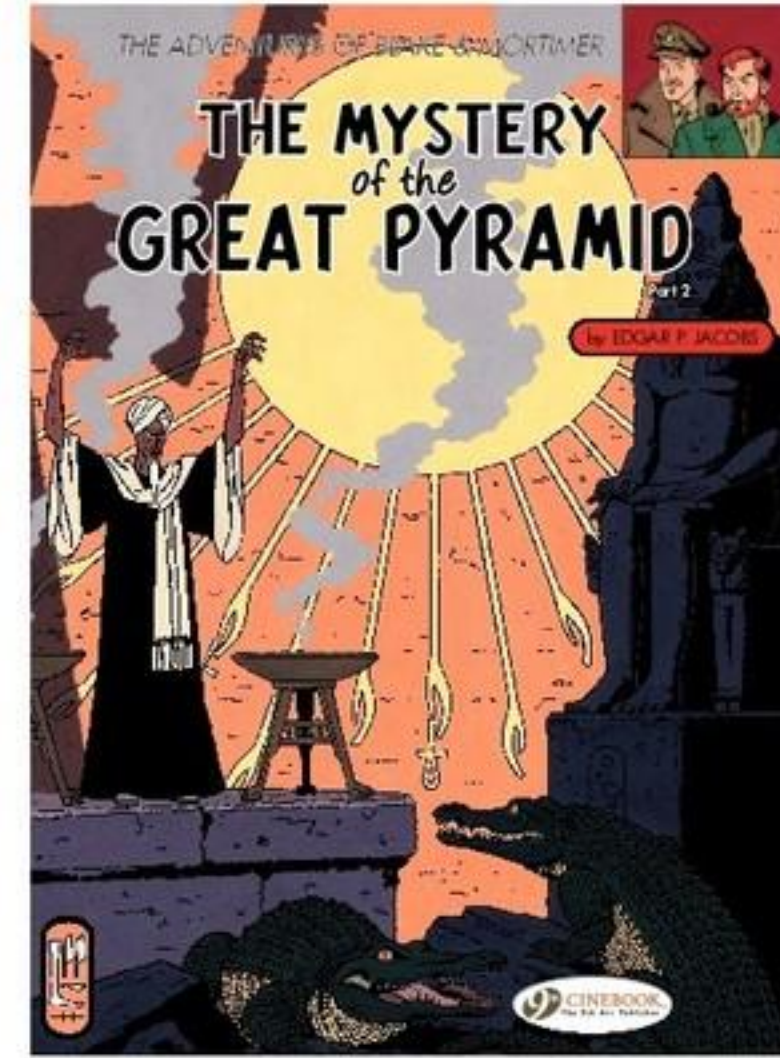
THE ADVENTURES OF BLAKE & MORTIMER



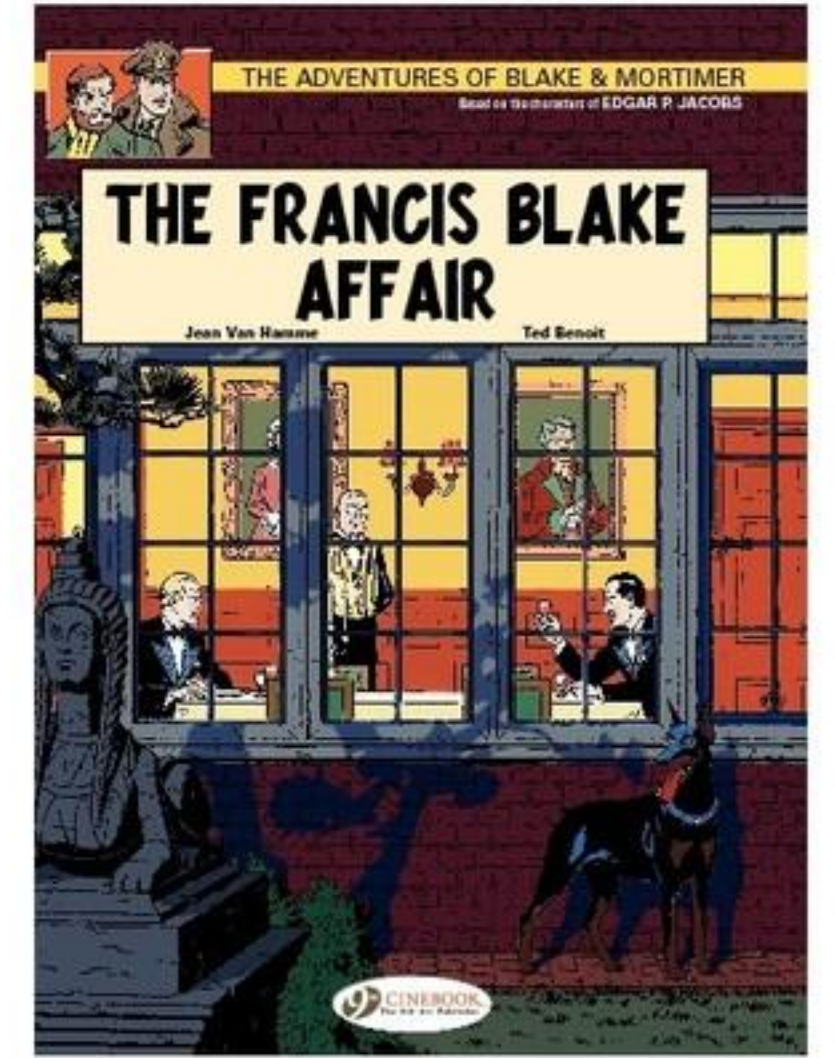
1-The Yellow "M"
EDGAR P. JACOBS



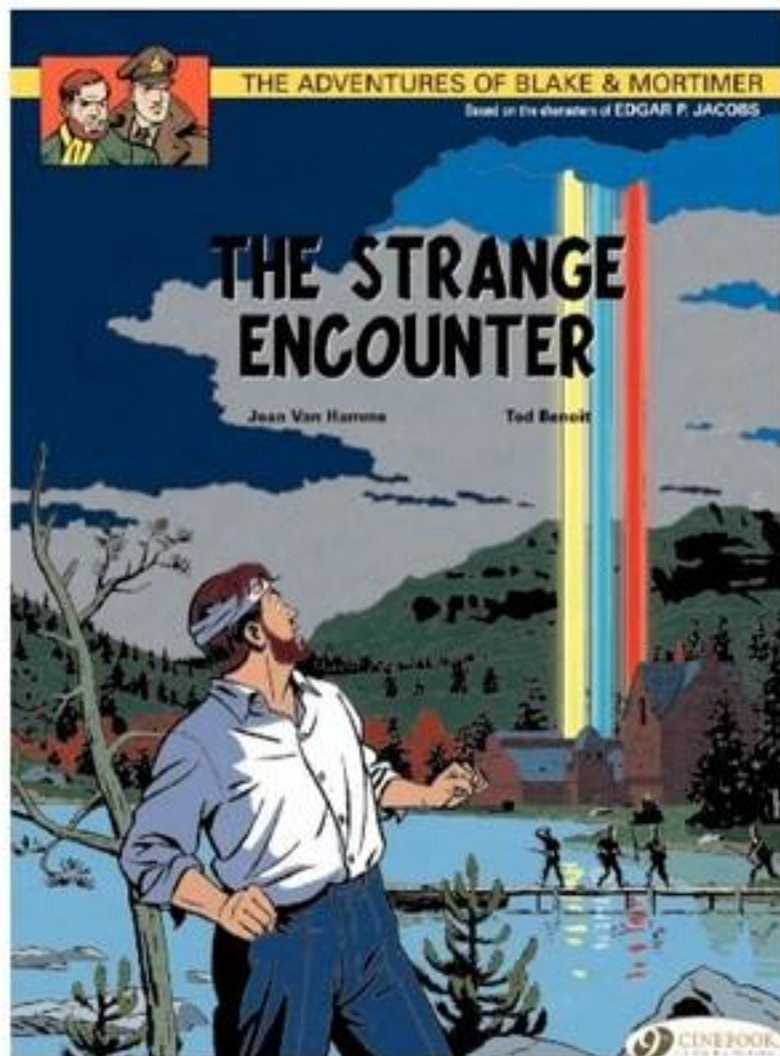
2-The Mystery of the Great Pyramid Part 1
EDGAR P. JACOBS



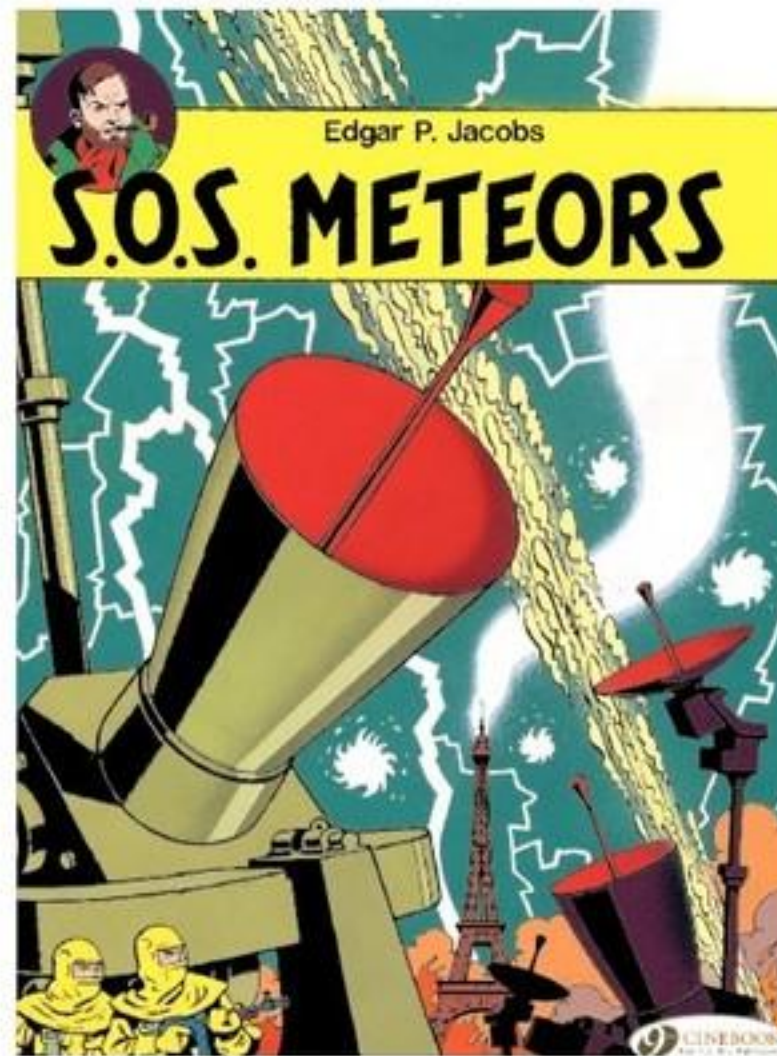
3-The Mystery of the Great Pyramid Part 2
EDGAR P. JACOBS



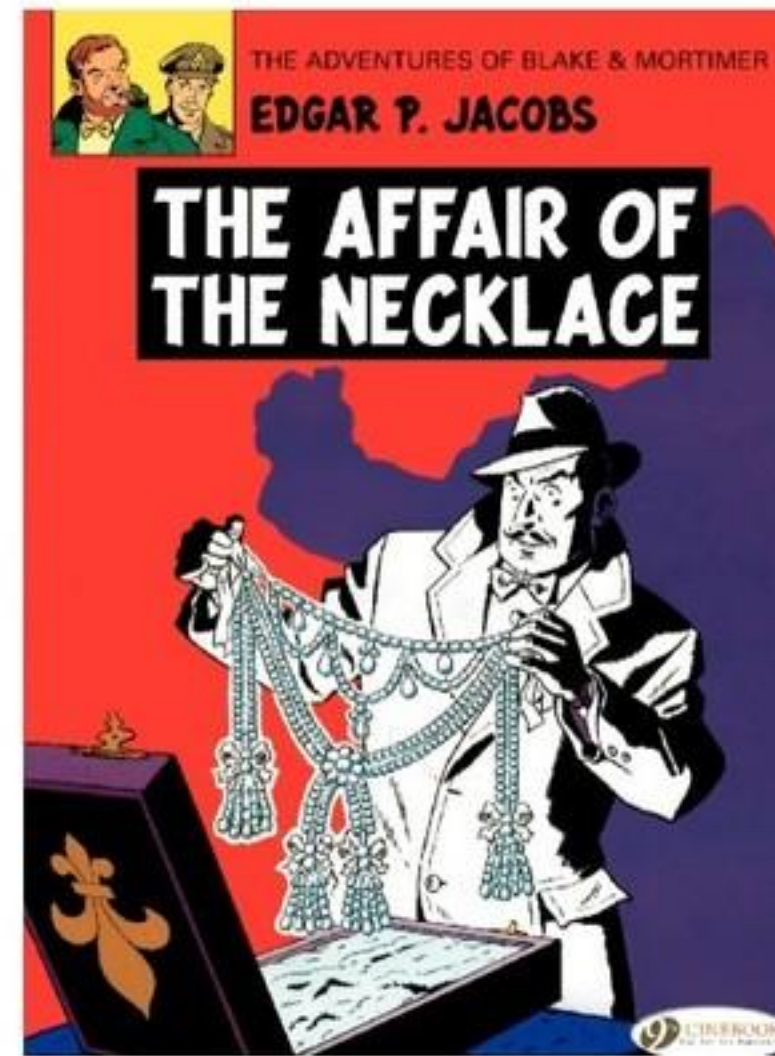
4-The Francis Blake Affair
VAN HAMME - BENOIT



5-The Strange Encounter
VAN HAMME - BENOIT



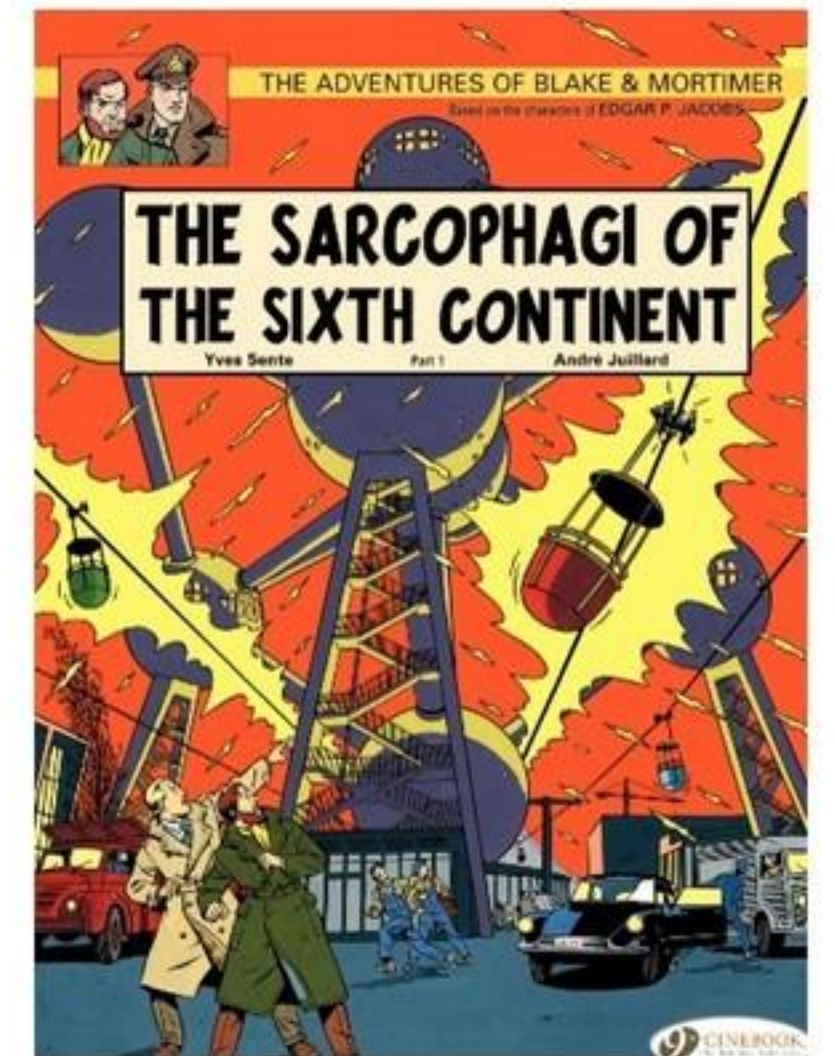
6-S.O.S. Meteors
EDGAR P. JACOBS



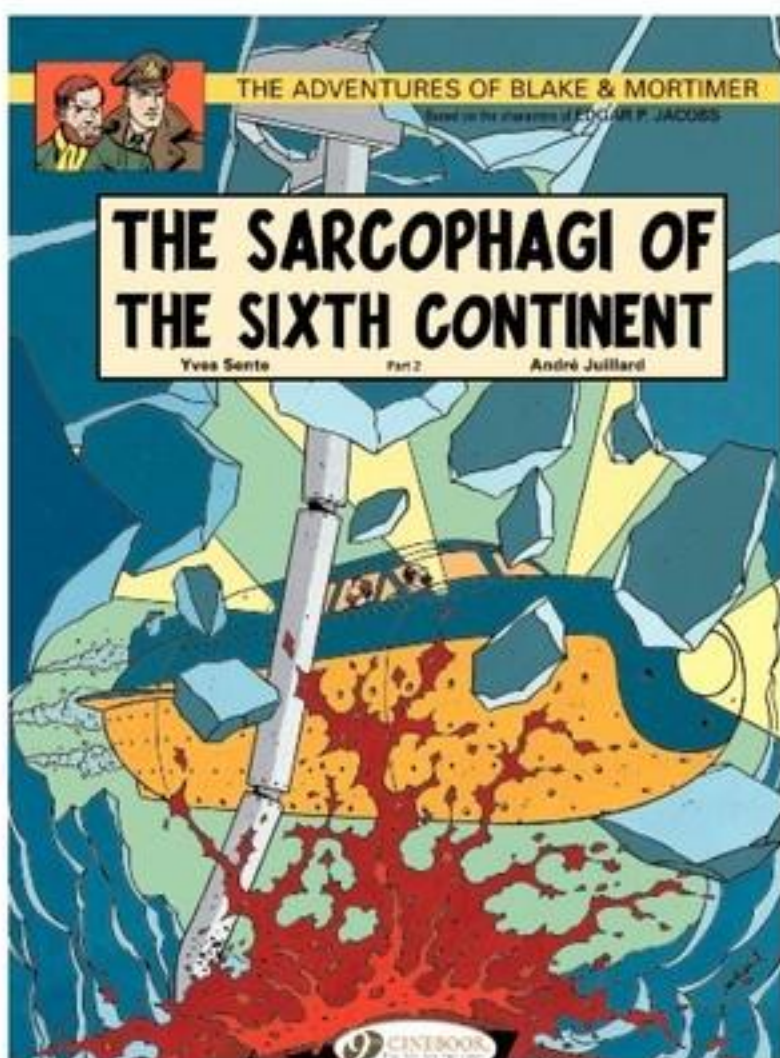
7-The Affair of the Necklace
EDGAR P. JACOBS



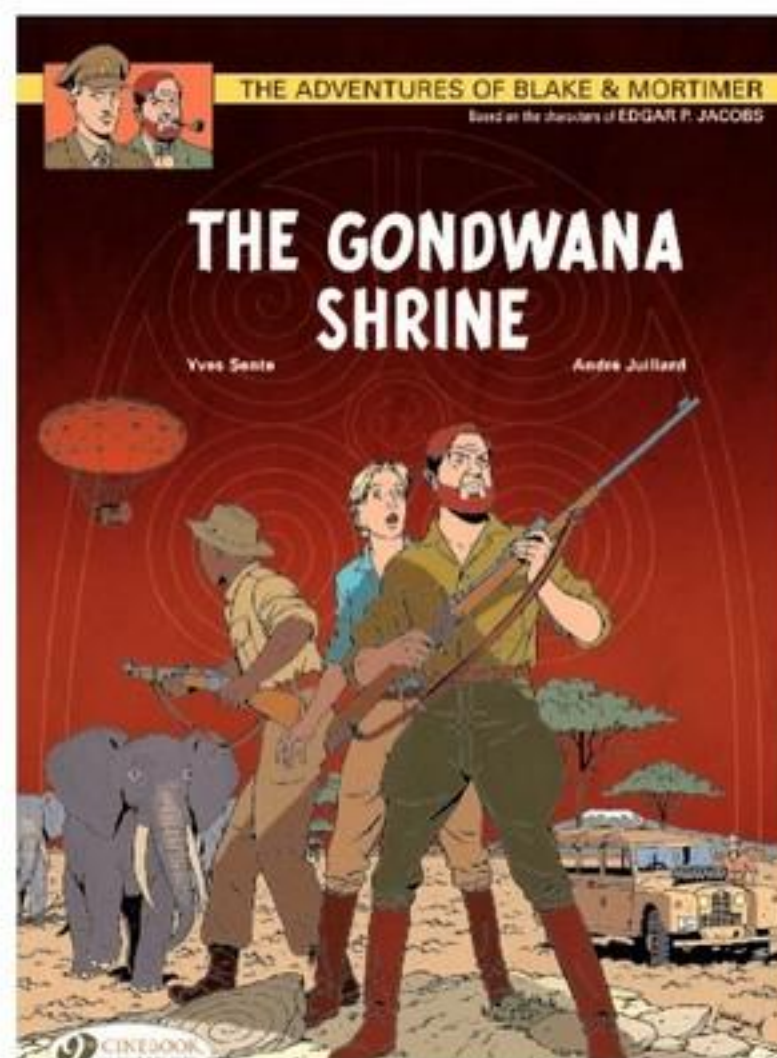
8-The Voronov Plot
SENTE - JUILLARD



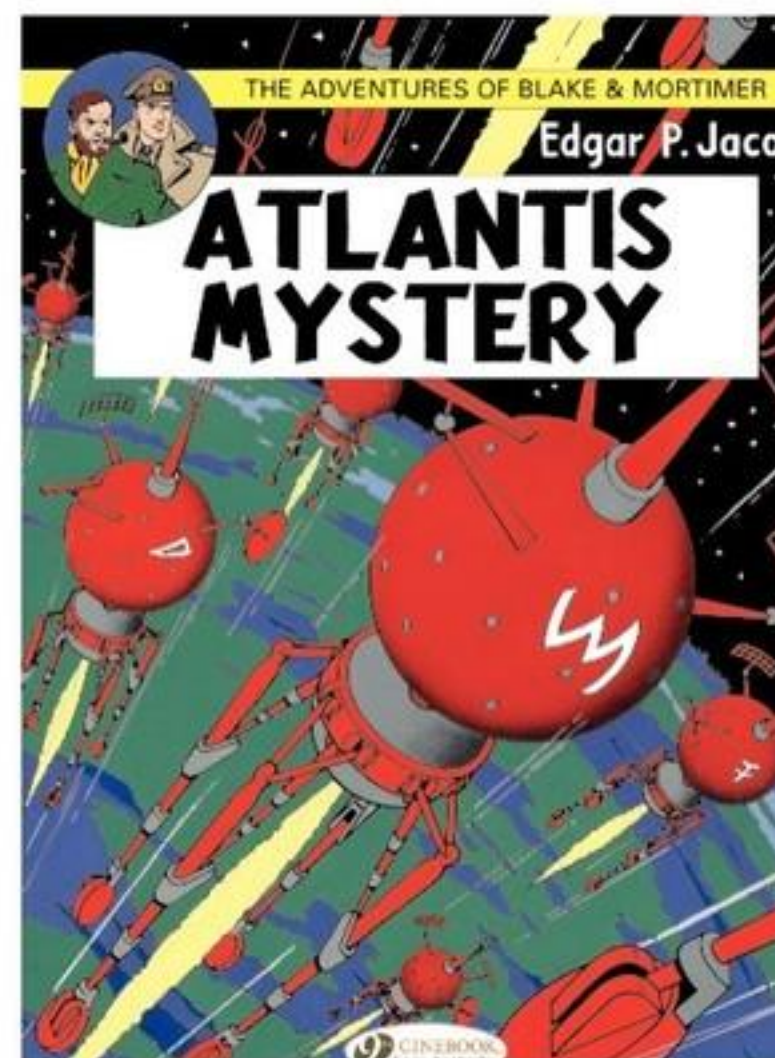
9-The Sarcophagi of the Sixth Continent Part 1
SENTE - JUILLARD



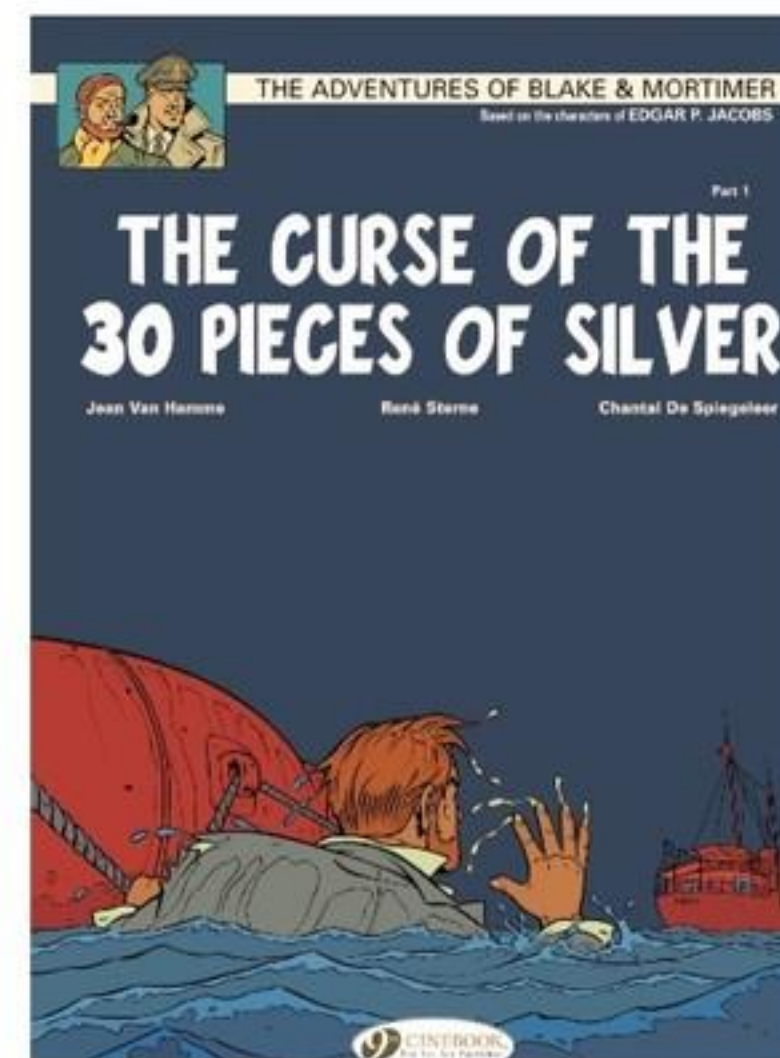
10-The Sarcophagi of the Sixth Continent Part 2
SENTE - JUILLARD



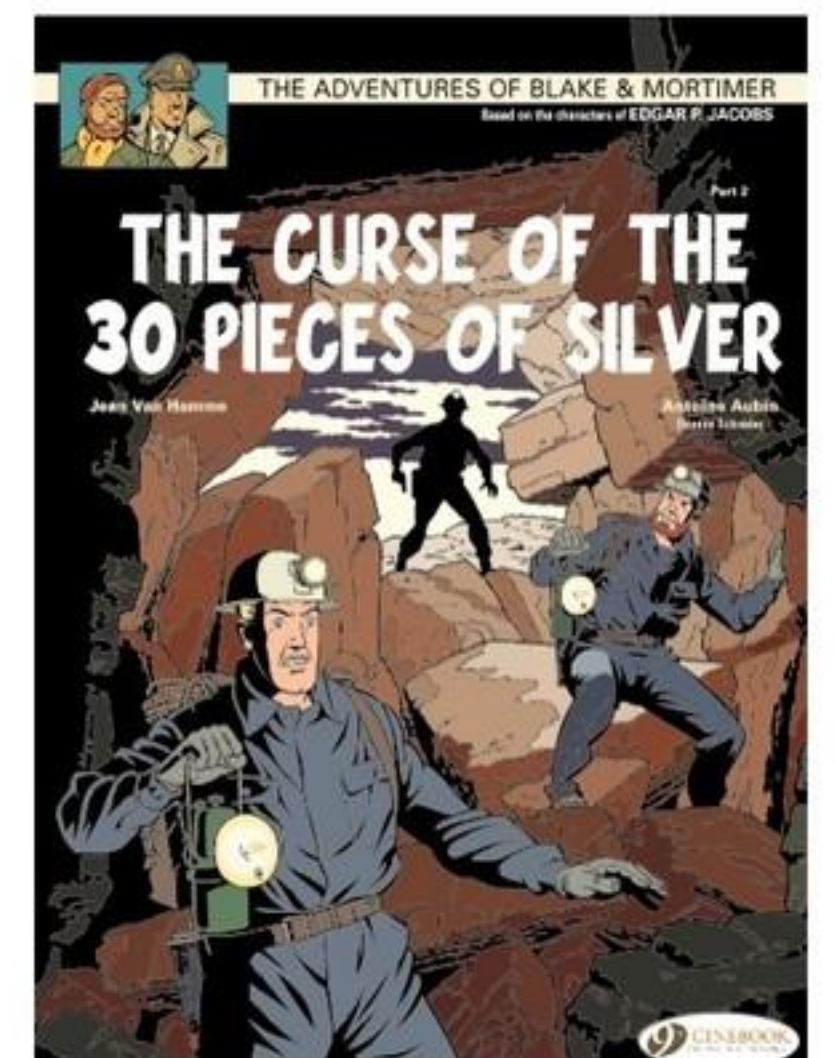
11-The Gondwana Shrine
SENTE - JUILLARD



12-Atlantis Mystery
EDGAR P. JACOBS

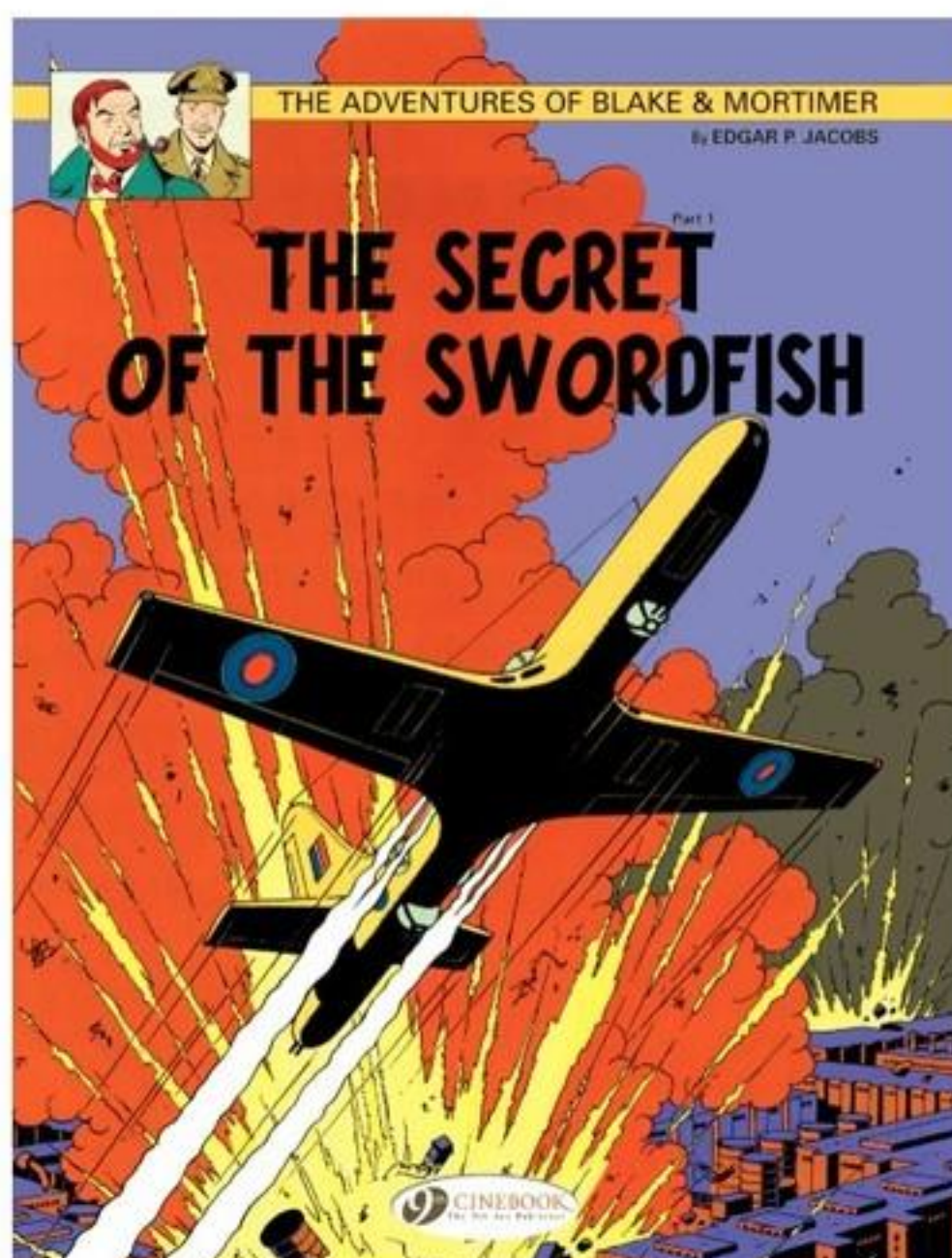


13-The Curse of the 30 Pieces of Silver Part 1
VAN HAMME - STERNE - DE SPIEGELEER

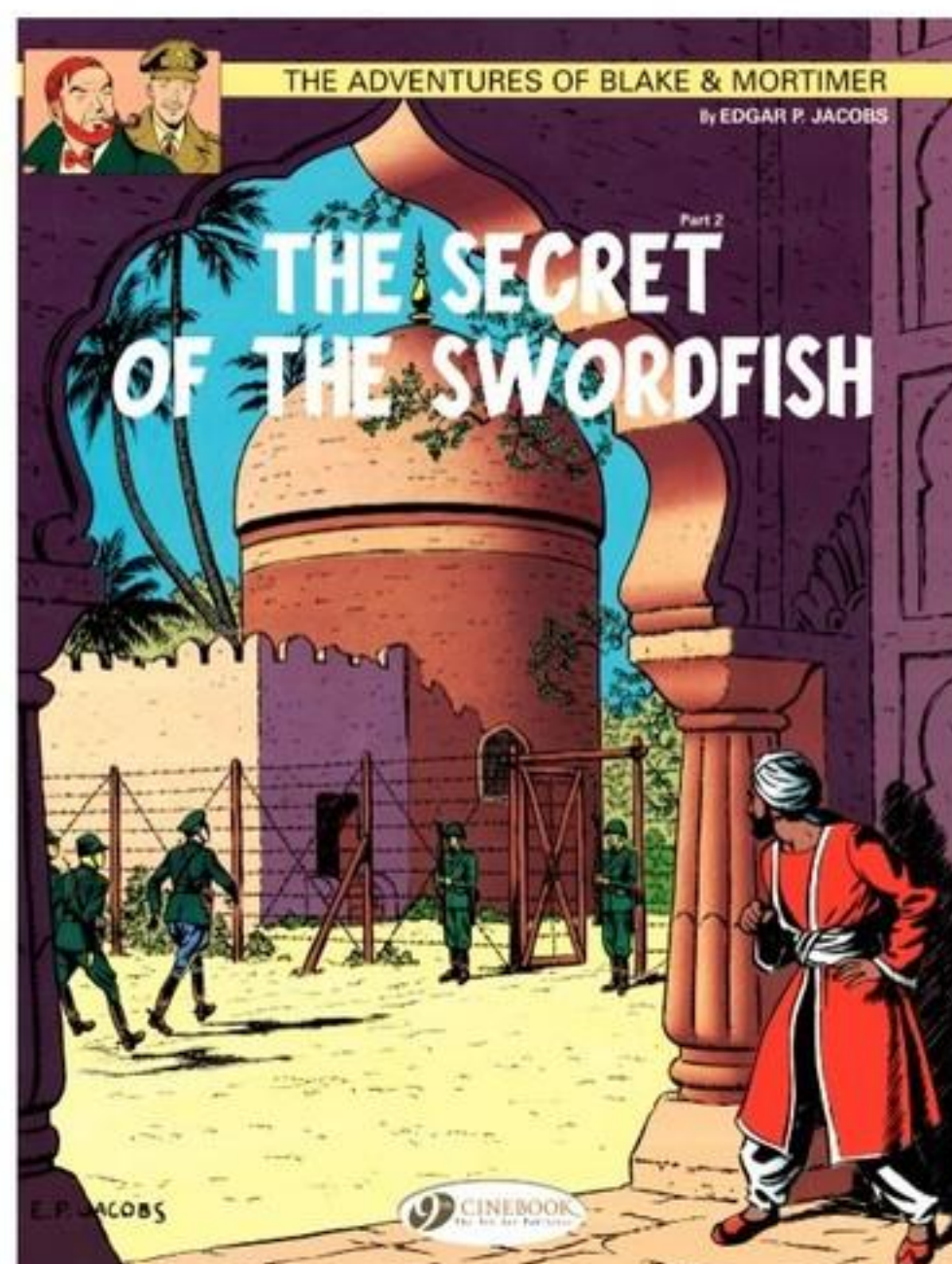


14-The Curse of the 30 Pieces of Silver Part 2
VAN HAMME - AUBIN - SCHRÖDER

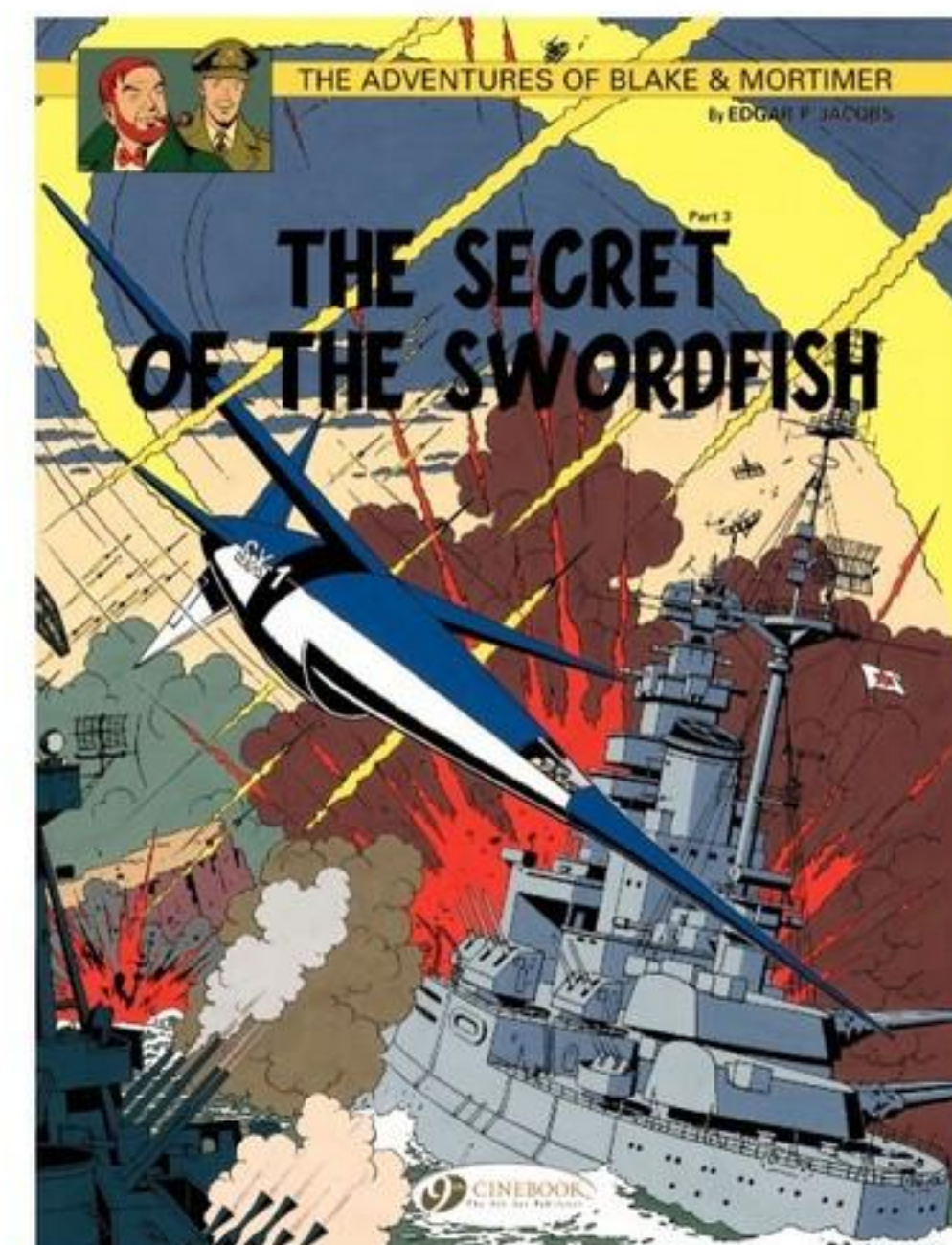
2013



15-The Secret of the Swordfish Part 1
EDGAR P. JACOBS

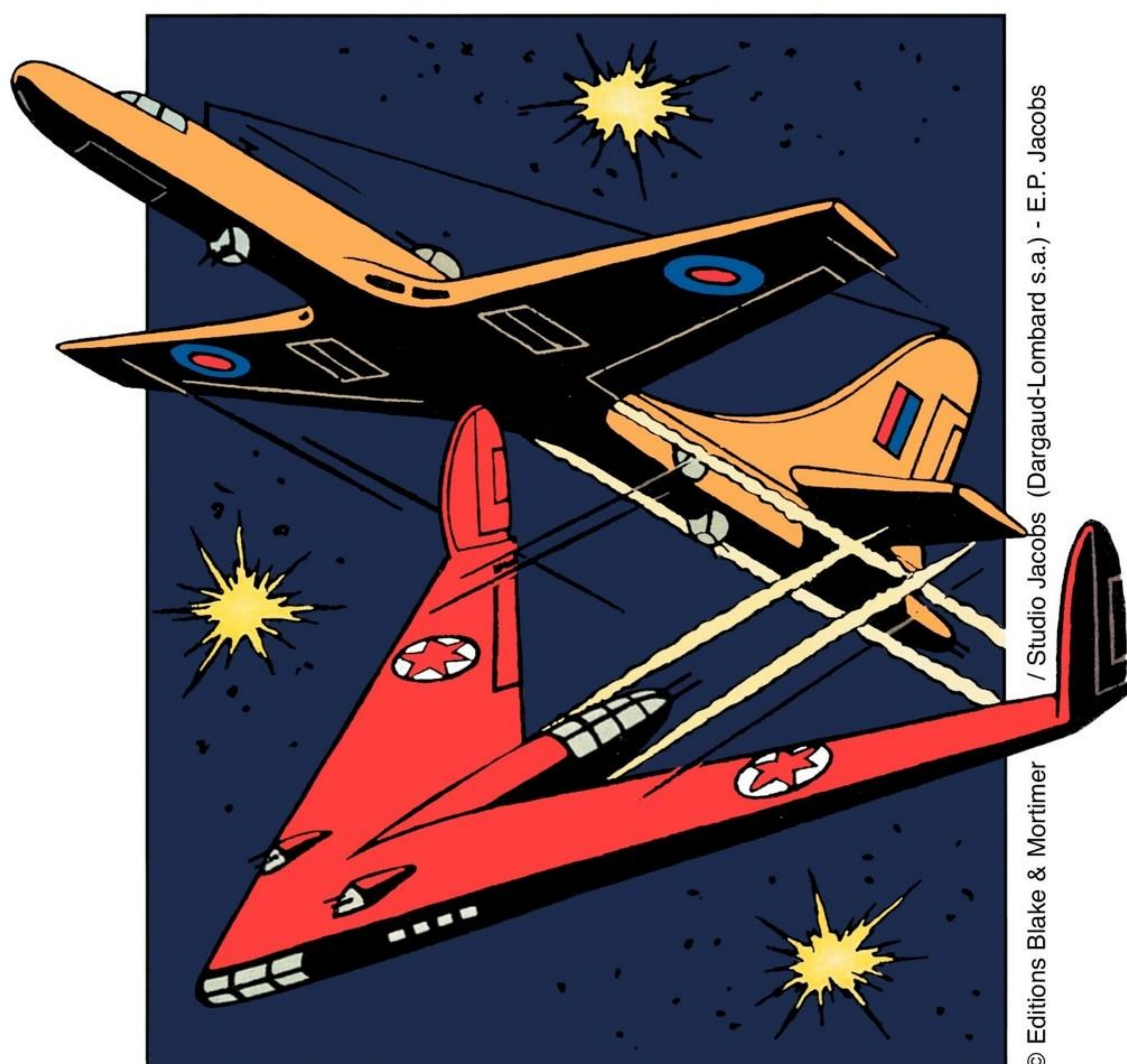


16-The Secret of the Swordfish Part 2
EDGAR P. JACOBS



17-The Secret of the Swordfish Part 3
EDGAR P. JACOBS

THE ORIGINAL ADVENTURES OF FRANCIS BLAKE AND PHILIP MORTIMER—AND THEIR FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH OLRİK.



	THE SECRET Part 1 OF THE SWORDFISH FEBRUARY 2013 PUBLISHED BY 
EDGAR P. JACOBS - 1946	



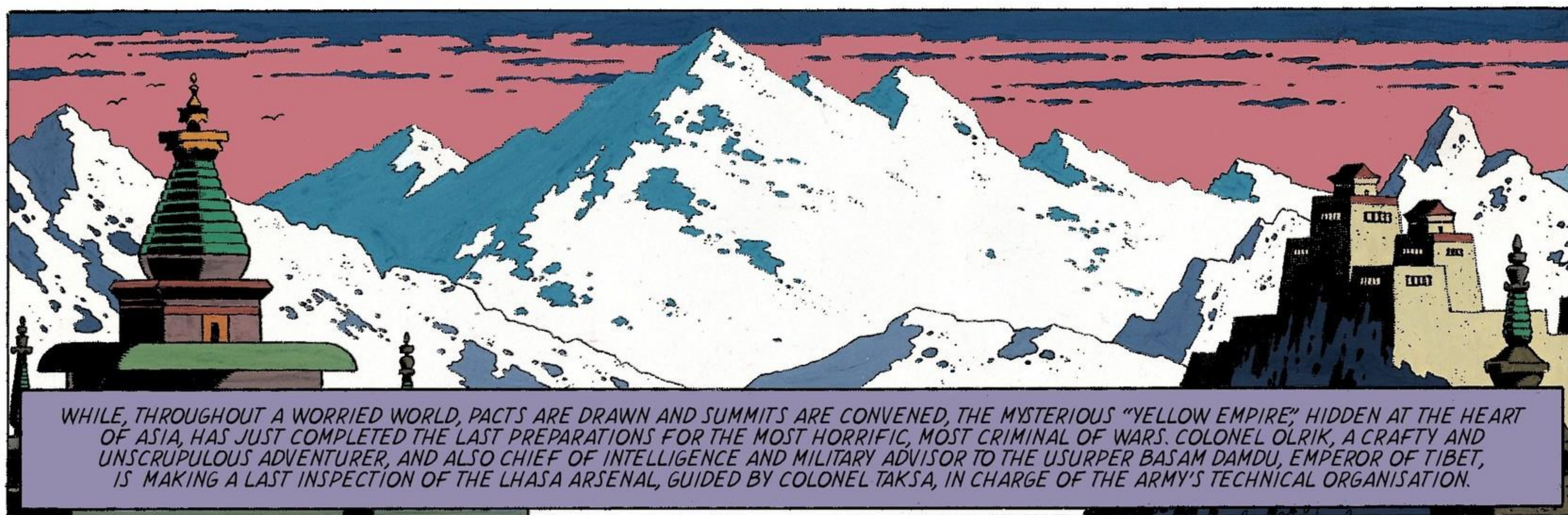
THE ADVENTURES OF BLAKE & MORTIMER

By EDGAR P. JACOBS

Part 1

THE SECRET OF THE SWORDFISH

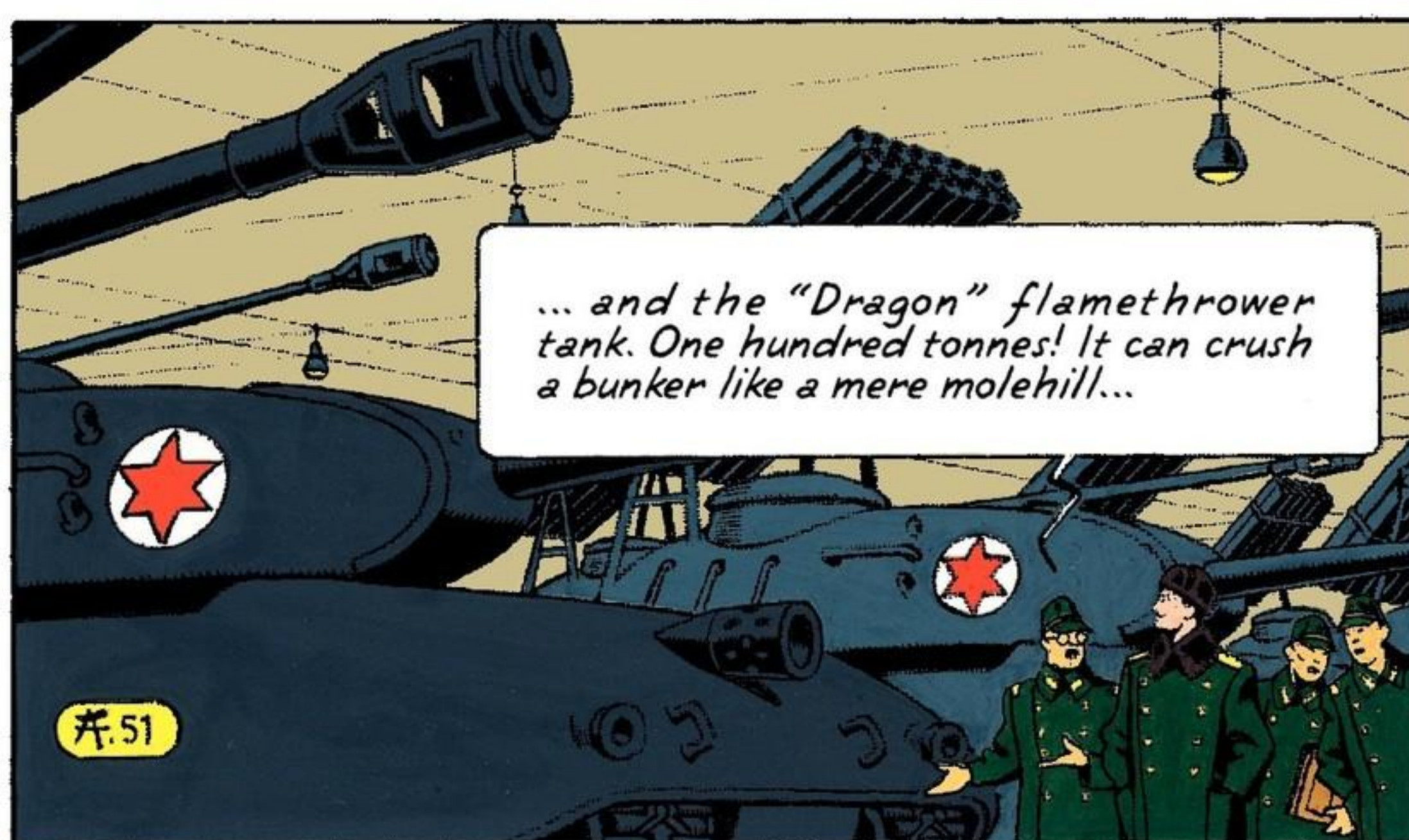




WHILE, THROUGHOUT A WORRIED WORLD, PACTS ARE DRAWN AND SUMMITS ARE CONVENED, THE MYSTERIOUS "YELLOW EMPIRE," HIDDEN AT THE HEART OF ASIA, HAS JUST COMPLETED THE LAST PREPARATIONS FOR THE MOST HORRIFIC, MOST CRIMINAL OF WARS. COLONEL OLRİK, A CRAFTY AND UNSCRUPULOUS ADVENTURER, AND ALSO CHIEF OF INTELLIGENCE AND MILITARY ADVISOR TO THE USURPER BASAM DAMDU, EMPEROR OF TIBET, IS MAKING A LAST INSPECTION OF THE LHASA ARSENAL, GUIDED BY COLONEL TAKSA, IN CHARGE OF THE ARMY'S TECHNICAL ORGANISATION.



... Finally, let's conclude with the super-bazooka, recoilless artillery capable of firing 500 rockets per minute...

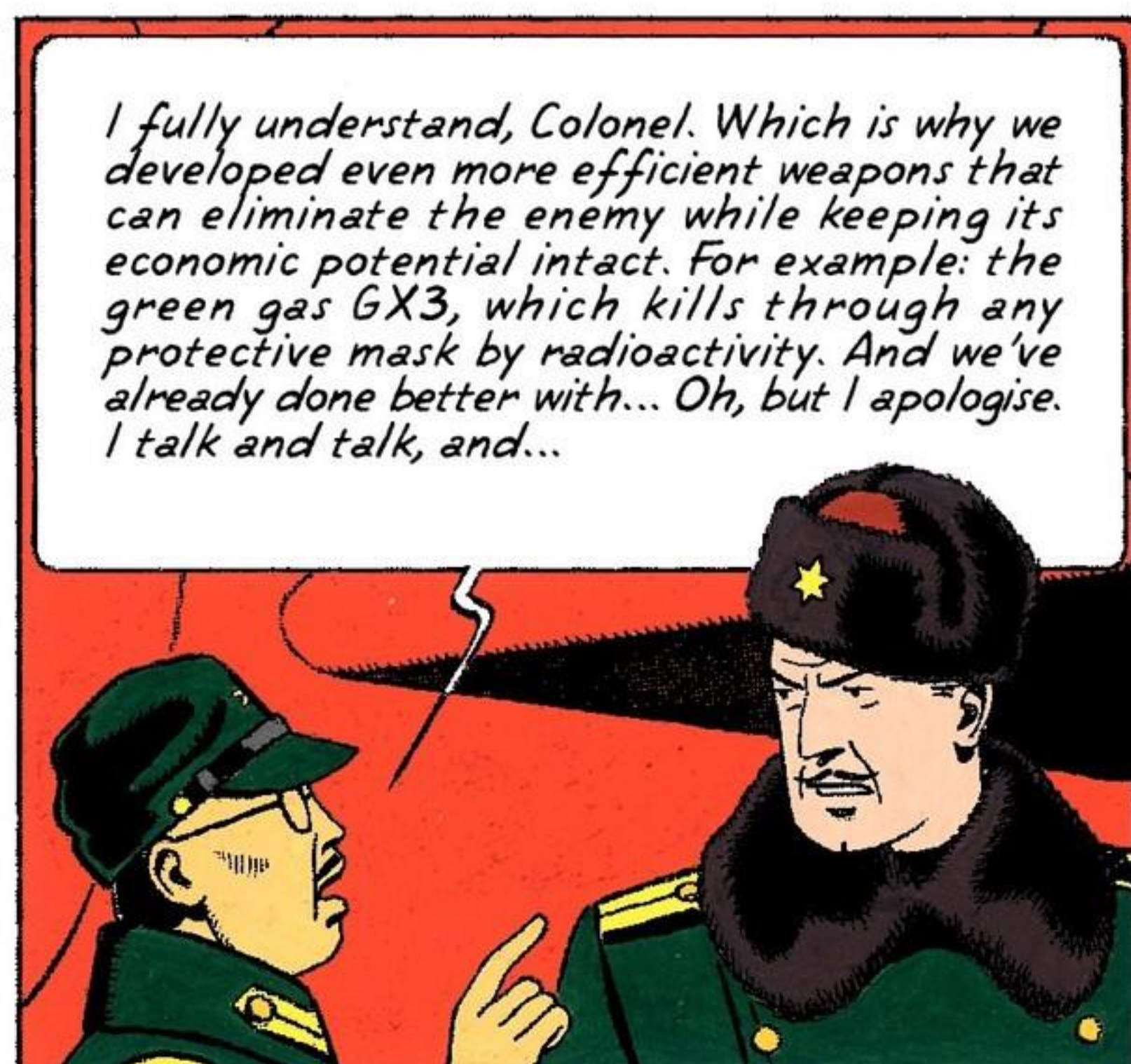


... and the "Dragon" flamethrower tank. One hundred tonnes! It can crush a bunker like a mere molehill...

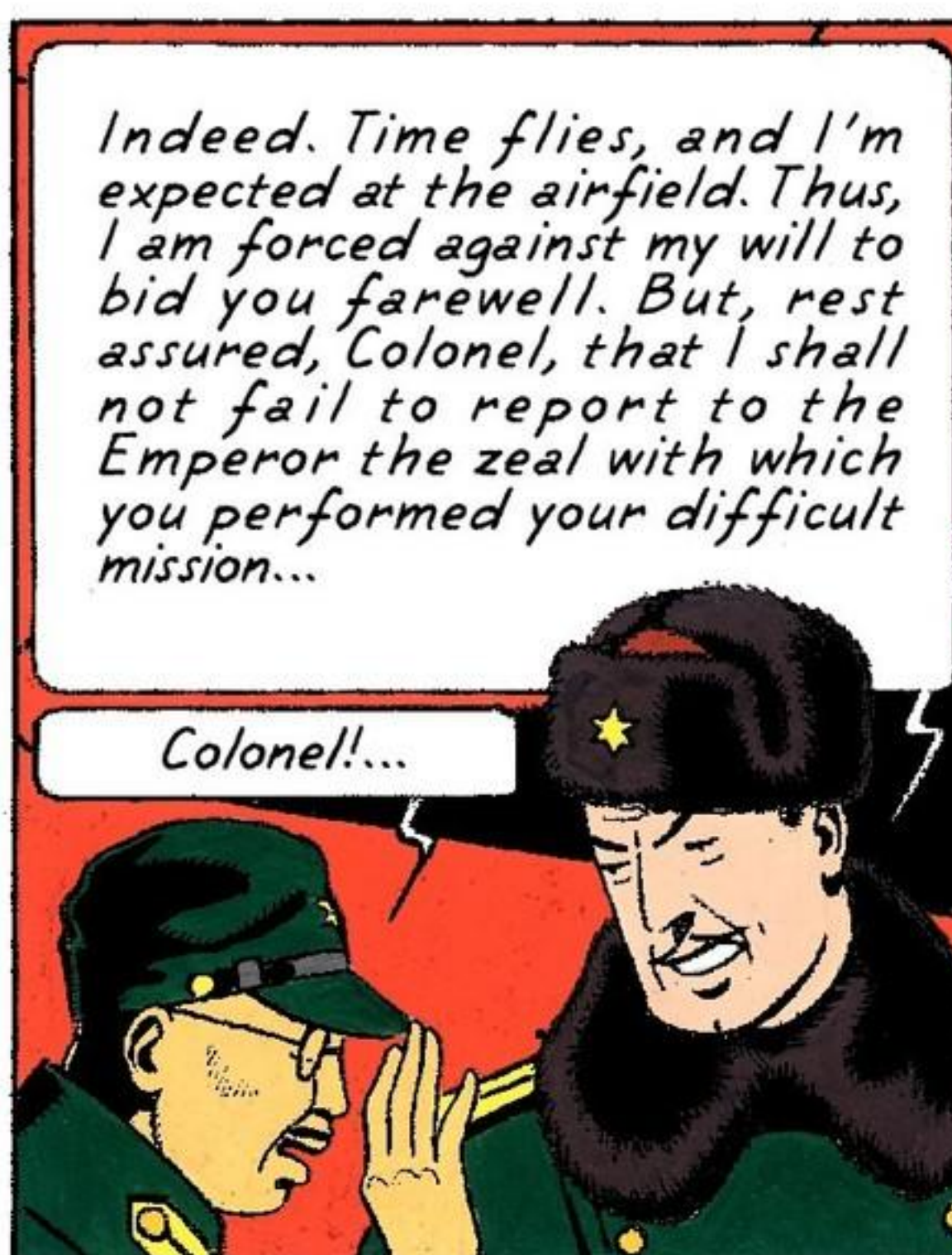


... and now that we have seen what we might call the conventional equipment, Colonel, here are the atomic weapons: rockets and drones that could smash the world in mere hours!...

Remarkable! However, we will only use them if we are forced to. Our goal is not to destroy, but to conquer...



I fully understand, Colonel. Which is why we developed even more efficient weapons that can eliminate the enemy while keeping its economic potential intact. For example: the green gas GX3, which kills through any protective mask by radioactivity. And we've already done better with... Oh, but I apologise. I talk and talk, and...

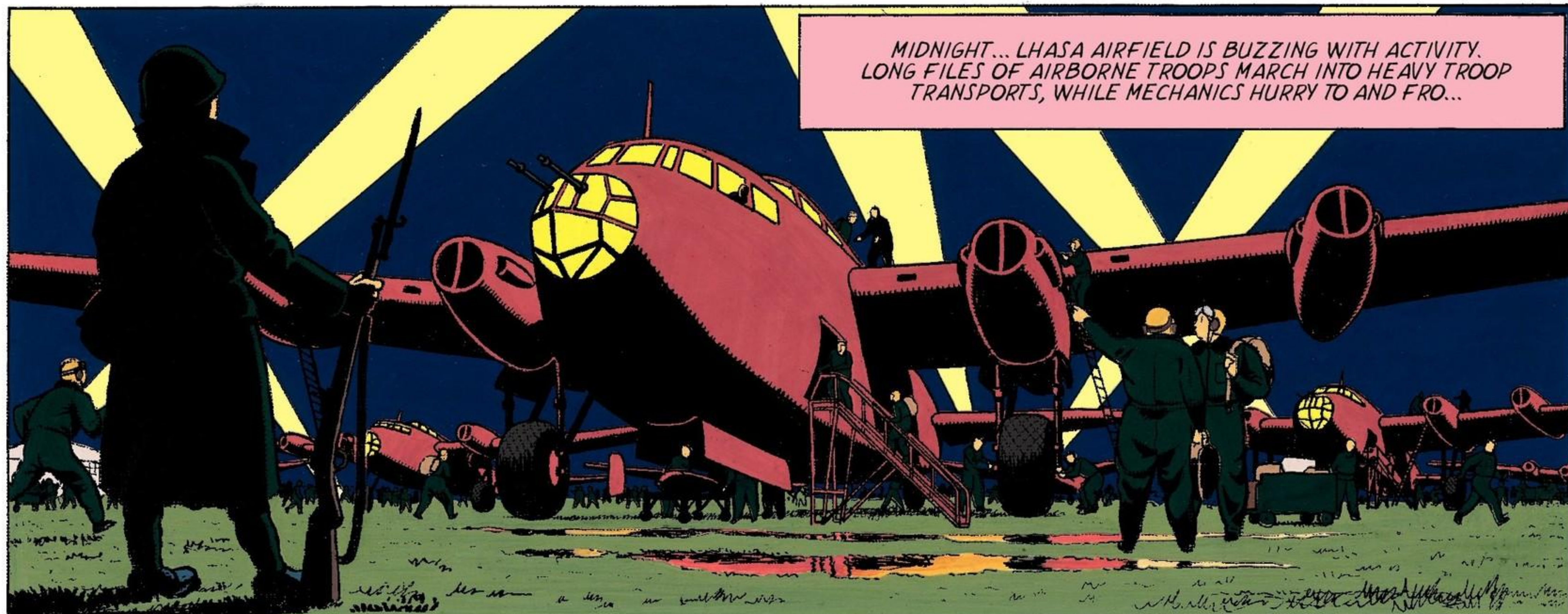


Indeed. Time flies, and I'm expected at the airfield. Thus, I am forced against my will to bid you farewell. But, rest assured, Colonel, that I shall not fail to report to the Emperor the zeal with which you performed your difficult mission...

Colonel!...



MOMENTS LATER, PASSING THE ARSENAL DOOR, THE COLONEL'S POWERFUL CAR SPEEDS AWAY INTO THE NIGHT.



MIDNIGHT... LHASA AIRFIELD IS BUZZING WITH ACTIVITY. LONG FILES OF AIRBORNE TROOPS MARCH INTO HEAVY TROOP TRANSPORTS, WHILE MECHANICS HURRY TO AND FRO...



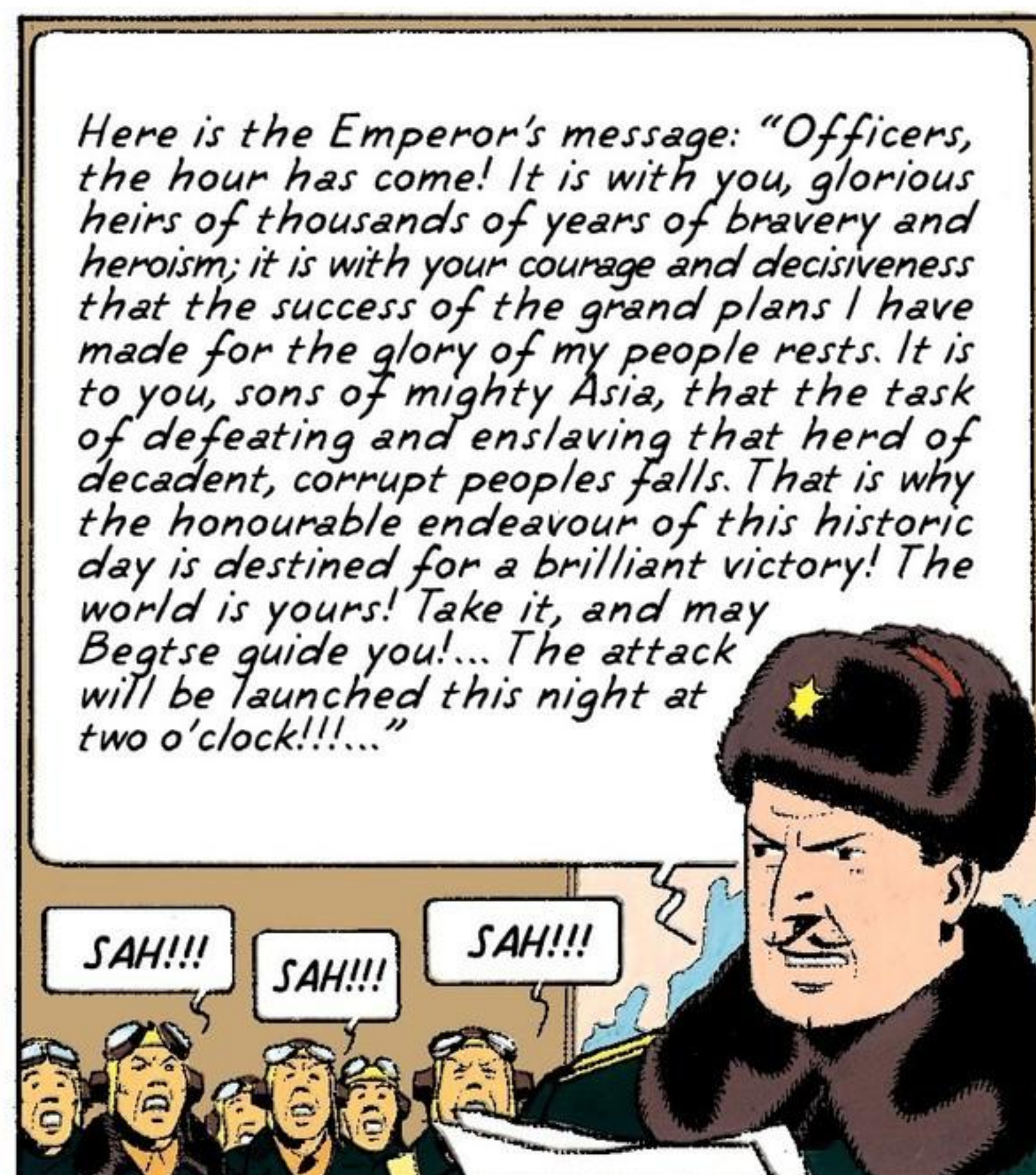
GATHERED INSIDE THE AIRPORT'S HEAD-QUARTERS, THE COMMANDERS OF THE VARIOUS WINGS ARE WAITING.



THE DOOR OPENS SUDDENLY...

Gentlemen! Colonel Olrik, advisor to His Majesty, brings you the Emperor's orders!...

Good evening, gentlemen...

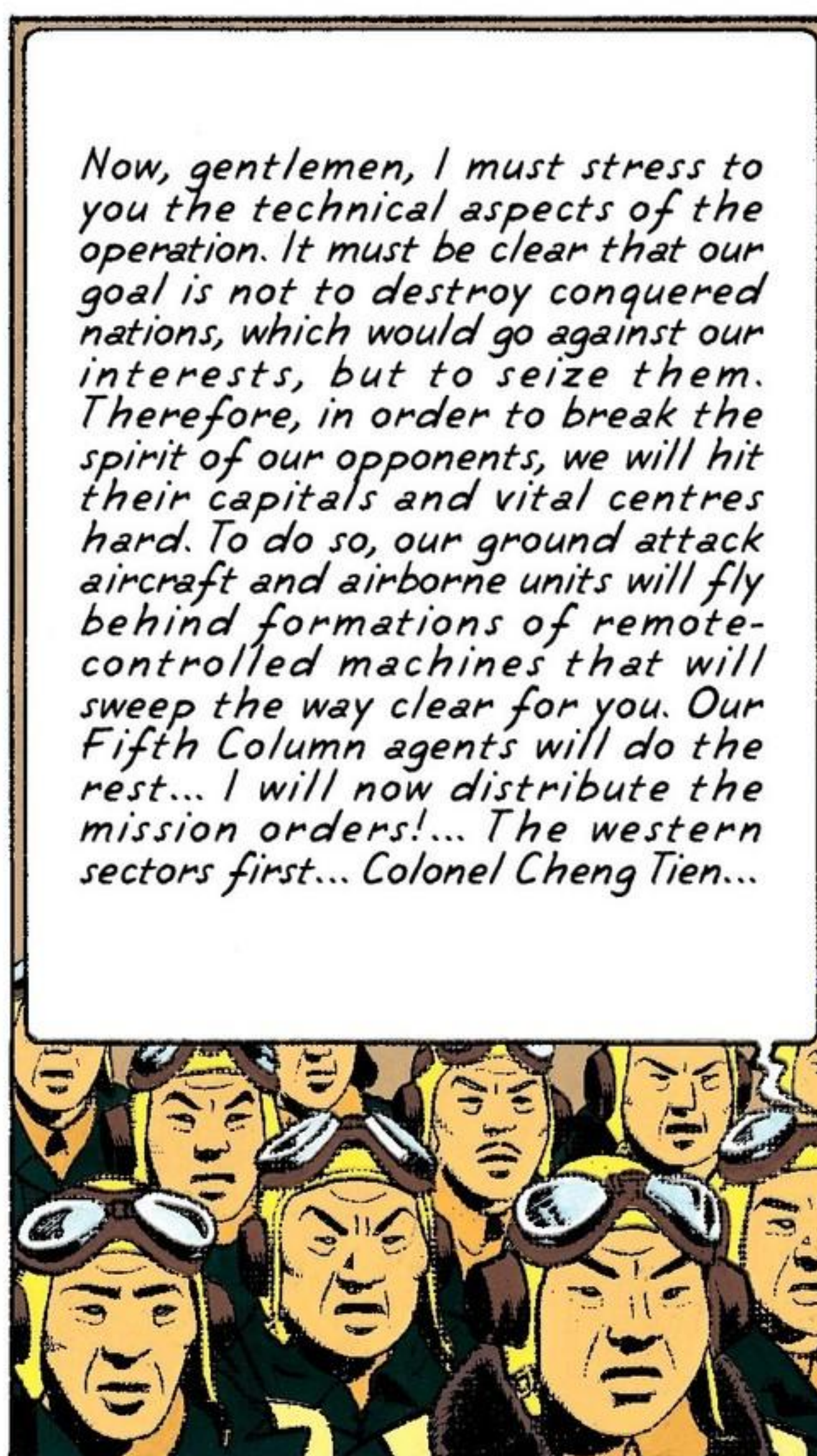


Here is the Emperor's message: "Officers, the hour has come! It is with you, glorious heirs of thousands of years of bravery and heroism; it is with your courage and decisiveness that the success of the grand plans I have made for the glory of my people rests. It is to you, sons of mighty Asia, that the task of defeating and enslaving that herd of decadent, corrupt peoples falls. That is why the honourable endeavour of this historic day is destined for a brilliant victory! The world is yours! Take it, and may Begtse guide you!... The attack will be launched this night at two o'clock!!!"

SAH!!!

SAH!!!

SAH!!!

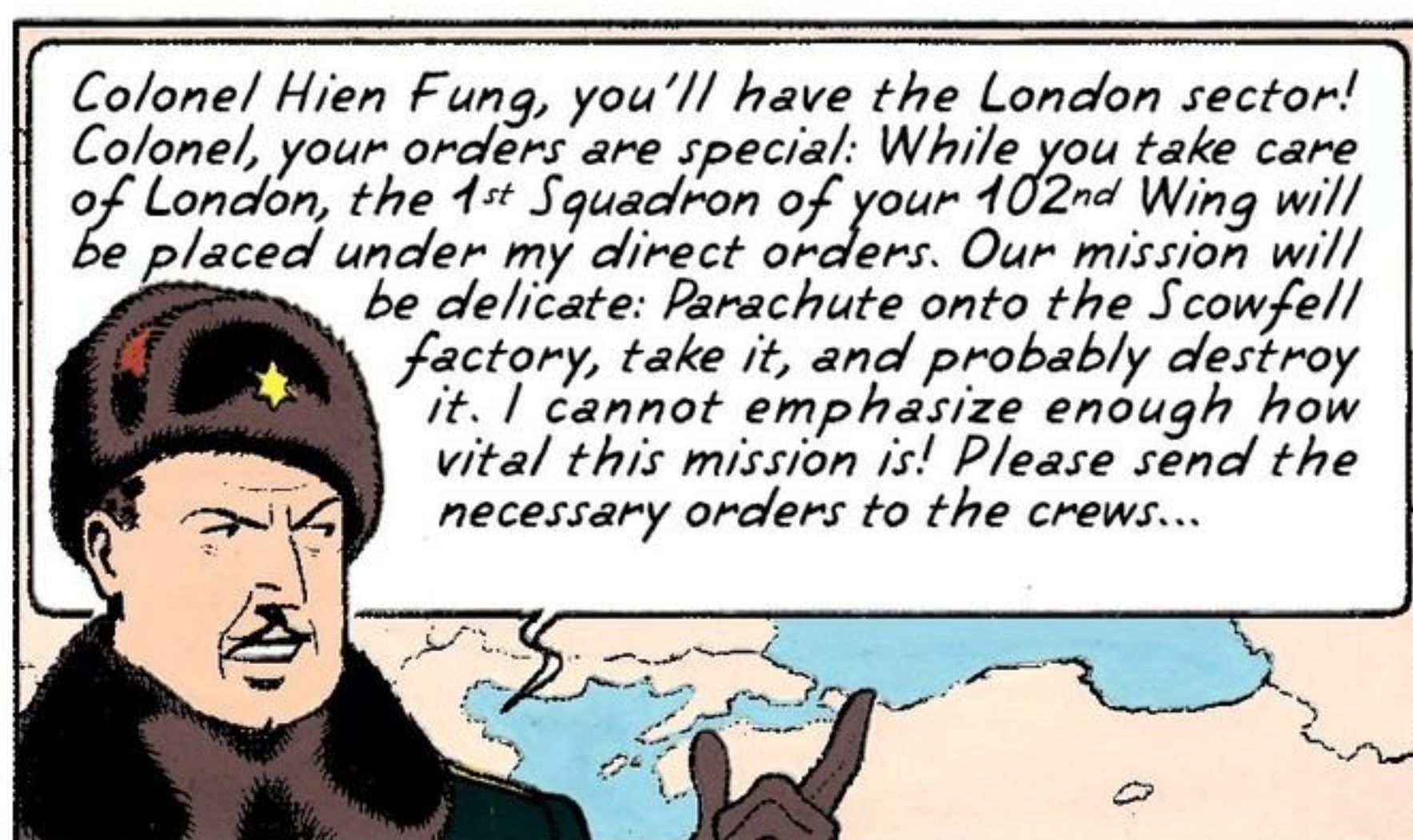


Now, gentlemen, I must stress to you the technical aspects of the operation. It must be clear that our goal is not to destroy conquered nations, which would go against our interests, but to seize them. Therefore, in order to break the spirit of our opponents, we will hit their capitals and vital centres hard. To do so, our ground attack aircraft and airborne units will fly behind formations of remote-controlled machines that will sweep the way clear for you. Our Fifth Column agents will do the rest... I will now distribute the mission orders!... The western sectors first... Colonel Cheng Tien...



... you get the Berlin sector... Colonel Lu Ying, Paris... Good luck!

You can count on us, Colonel!



Colonel Hien Fung, you'll have the London sector! Colonel, your orders are special: While you take care of London, the 1st Squadron of your 102nd Wing will be placed under my direct orders. Our mission will be delicate: Parachute onto the Scowfell factory, take it, and probably destroy it. I cannot emphasize enough how vital this mission is! Please send the necessary orders to the crews...



BUT, AS THE WING COMMANDERS, ONE BY ONE, COME FORWARD TO TAKE THEIR MISSION ORDERS, CAPTAIN HASSO—AN AGENT WORKING FOR THE BRITISH INTELLIGENCE SERVICE—LISTENS IN WITH A MICROPHONE, HIDDEN BENEATH THE CONFERENCE ROOM...

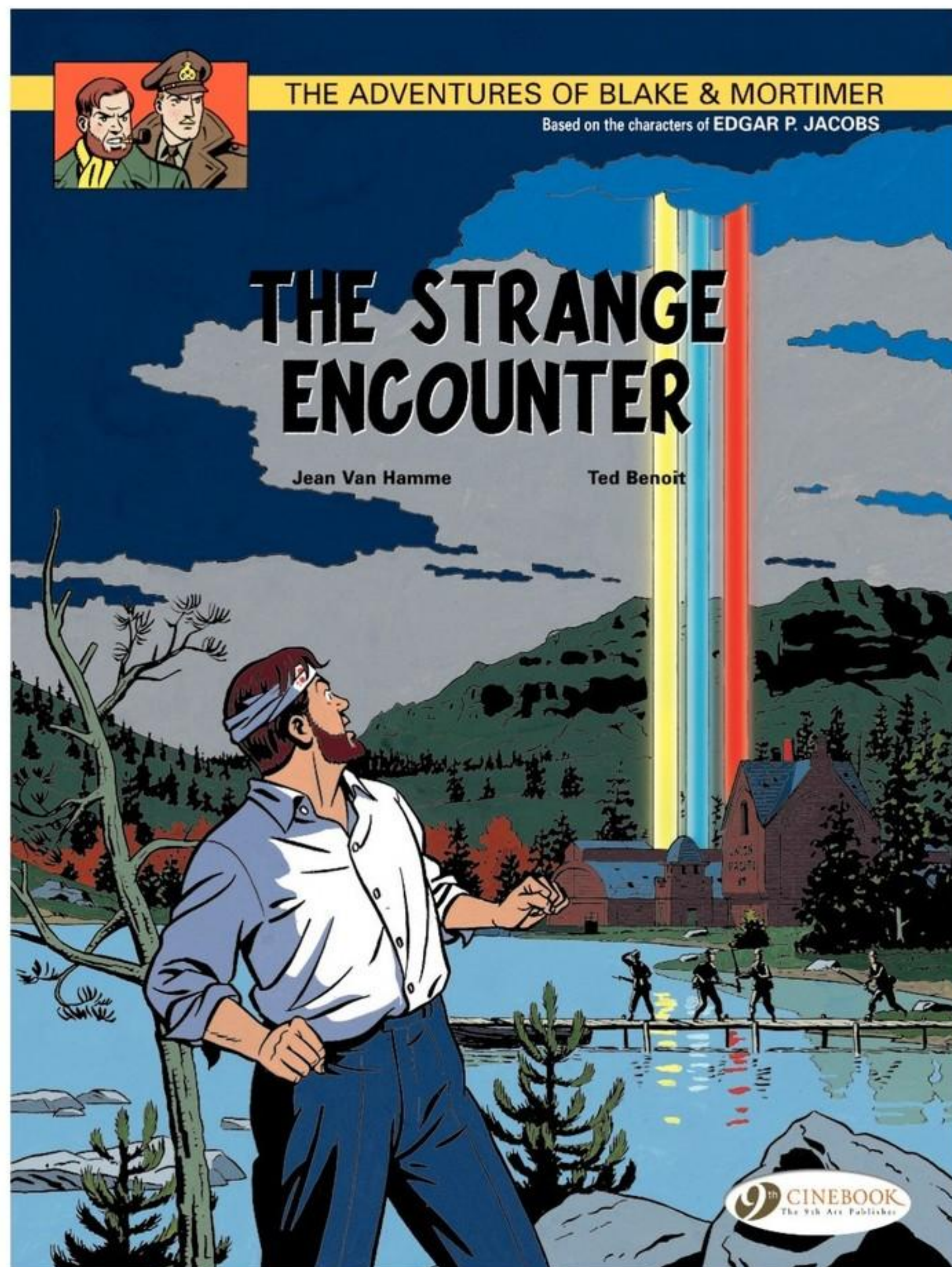
HA! HA!

THE STRANGE ENCOUNTER

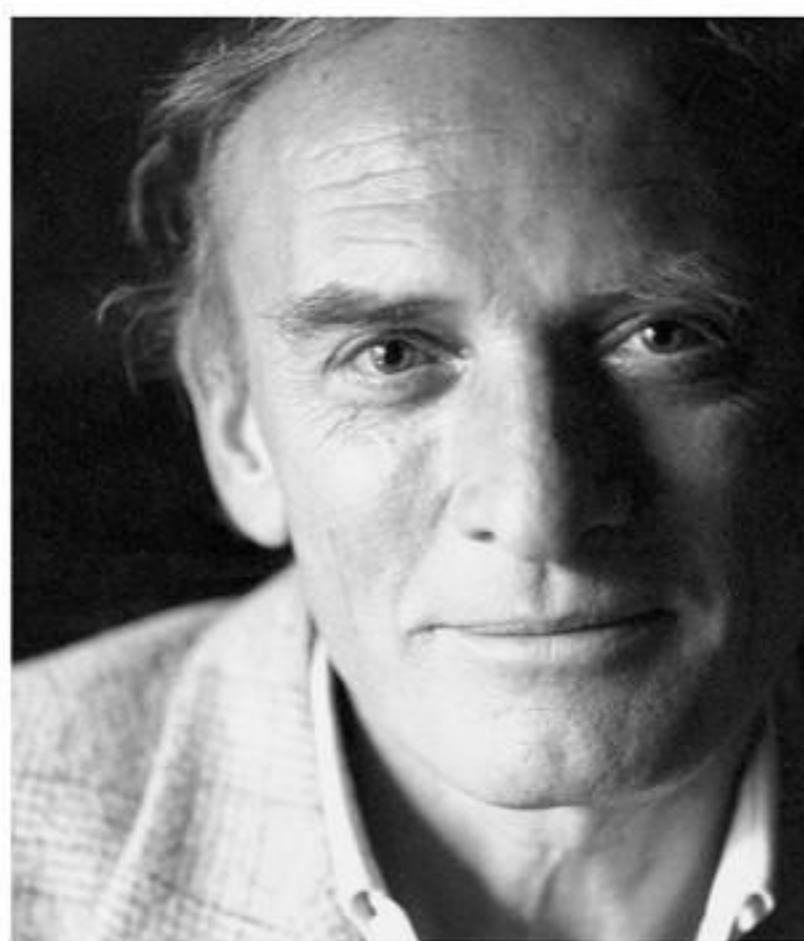
Jean Van Hamme

Ted Benoit

Based on the characters of **EDGAR P. JACOBS**

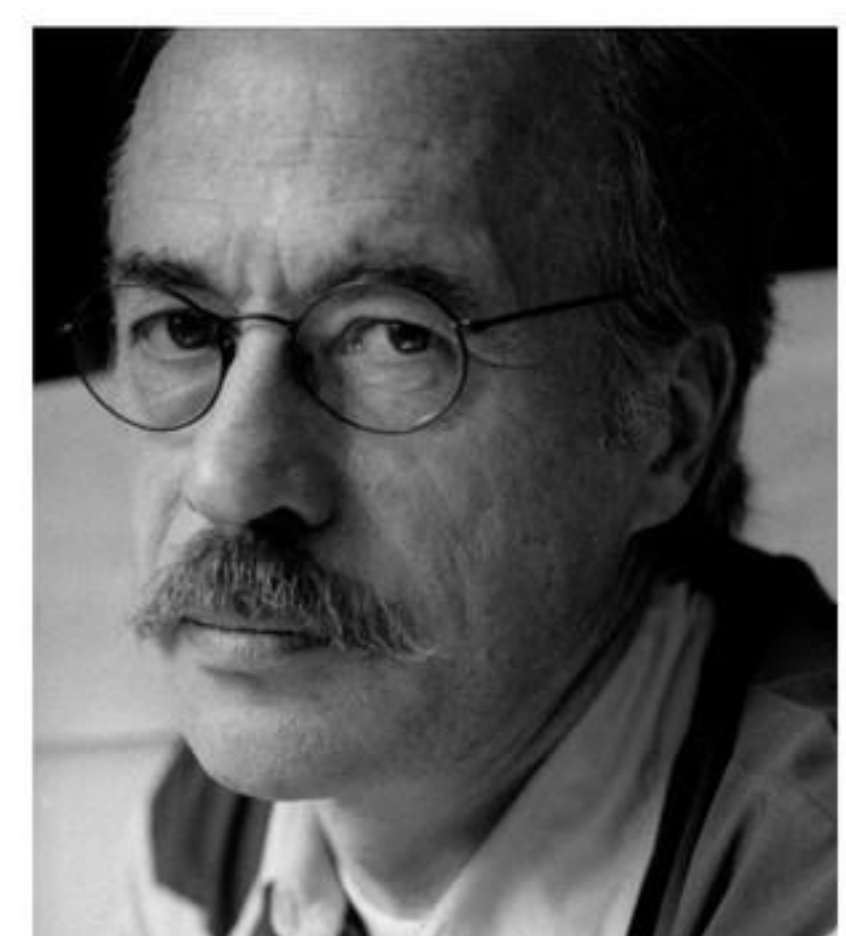


Blake and Mortimer head to the United States to investigate the mysterious circumstances surrounding the discovery of a 177-year-old body, which appears to have died very recently. The body is that of a Scottish major, Mortimer's forebear, who was leading a British military expedition to the US in 1777, where he was swallowed up by a strange multi-coloured light-beam shining down from the sky. Blake and Mortimer fight men in black armed with green-laser guns and soldiers emerging from the past in order to save the Earth from complete obliteration.



Jean **Van Hamme** is one of Belgium's most successful contemporary novelists and comics writers. His most popular successes are "Thorgal" (illustrated by **Rosinski**), "Largo Winch" (illustrated by **Francq**), "Lady S." (illustrated by **Aymond**) and "XIII" (illustrated by **Vance**). These series are translated and published in English by Cinebook. In 2005, he was appointed "Officier des Arts et des Lettres" by the French Minister of Culture.

The artist Ted **Benoit** is a big admirer and supporter of the "clear line" graphic style instituted by **Hergé** and E. P. **Jacobs**. His work is described simply as a combination of extravagance, meticulousness and intelligence. For over 30 years, Ted **Benoit** has been creating work of surprisingly powerful simplicity, from the "Vers la Ligne Claire" collection in 1979 to the "Un Nouveau Monde" collection published in 2006.



AFTER GOING THROUGH PASSPORT CONTROL AND CLAIMING THEIR LUGGAGE, THE TWO FRIENDS GET TO THE AIRPORT'S ARRIVAL HALL. AMONG THE CROWD WAITING FOR THE PASSENGERS FROM LONDON, MORTIMER LOCATES AN ASIAN MAN HOLDING A SIGN WITH HIS NAME.



Welcome to the United States, Professor Mortimer. I am Jimmy Tcheng, Dr Kaufman's assistant.

A pleasure, Mr Tcheng. And this is my friend, Captain Francis Blake.



BUT BLAKE'S PRESENCE SEEMS TO UPSET THE CHINESE-AMERICAN.

Ah... Doc... Doctor Kaufman didn't mention you'd have company...

Don't worry, Mr Tcheng...



THE TWO FRIENDS SAY THEIR GOODBYES...

A happy coincidence, old fellow, if it allowed us to travel together.

I'm counting on you to keep me apprised of the rest of your astounding story, my dear Philip.

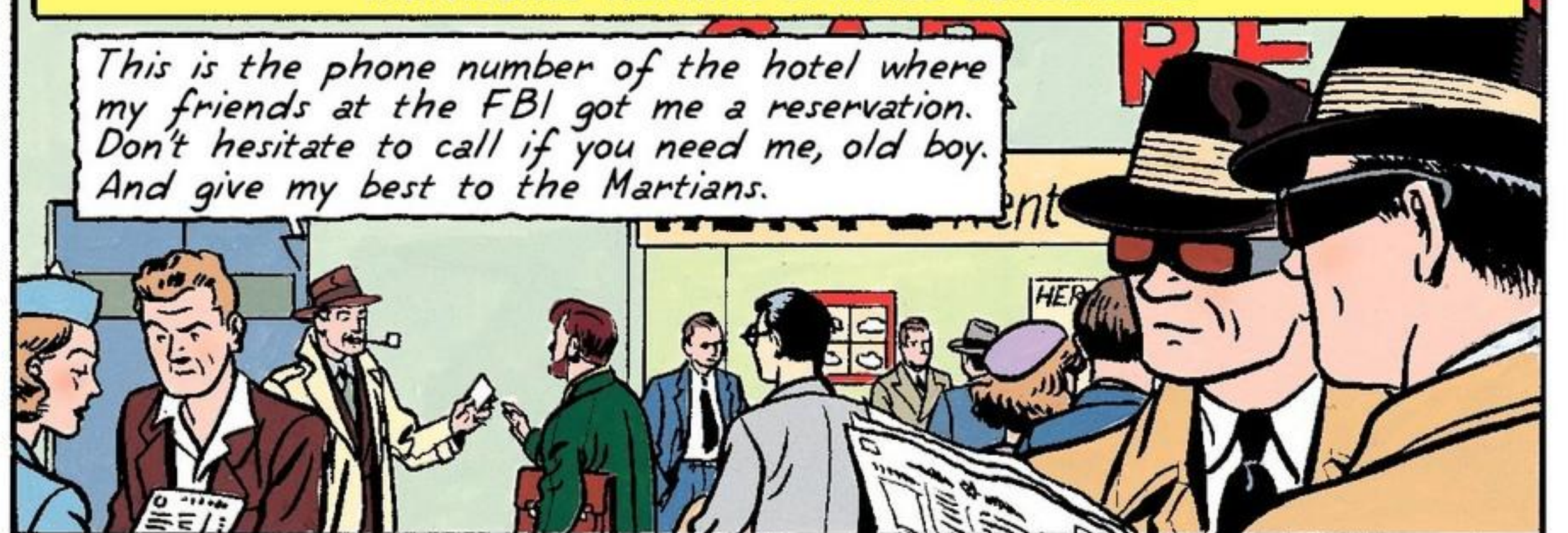


... My presence on this flight with the professor is no more than a coincidence. I'm here to take part in a routine meeting with my colleagues in Washington.



... UNAWARE THAT THEY ARE BEING OBSERVED BY TWO INDIVIDUALS WEARING STRANGE SUNGLASSES.

This is the phone number of the hotel where my friends at the FBI got me a reservation. Don't hesitate to call if you need me, old boy. And give my best to the Martians.



WHILE HIS PARTNER KEEPS AN EYE ON OUR FRIENDS, ONE OF THE MEN HAS SLIPPED INTO A PHONE BOOTH AND DIALED A MYSTERIOUS NUMBER.

A certain Captain Blake is with him... He mentioned the FBI...

By the Devil! If Blake is here, then it's because he's gotten wind of something. He must be eliminated. Here are my instructions...



I suppose you will be flying to Washington?

Oh, no! Enough flying for me! I'd rather drive there. That way I'll get to enjoy the scenery. Have a nice day, Mr Tcheng!



BUT AS THE SINO-AMERICAN LEADS MORTIMER TOWARDS THE DOMESTIC FLIGHT GATES, A STENTORIAN VOICE STOPS THEM IN THEIR TRACKS.

Come on, Professor, we have just enough time to catch the flight to Topeka...

PROFESSOR MORTIMER!



Edgard Félix Pierre Jacobs (1904–1987), better known under his pen name Edgar P. Jacobs, was a comic book creator (writer and artist), born in Brussels, Belgium. It has been said of Jacobs that he didn't remember a time when he hadn't drawn.

Jacobs assisted fellow Belgian Hergé (Georges Prosper Remi) in the recasting of Hergé's *Tintin in the Congo*, *Tintin in America*, *King Ottokar's Sceptre* and *The Blue Lotus* for book publication. He also contributed directly to both the drawing and storylines for the Tintin double-albums *The Secret of the Unicorn/Red Rackham's Treasure* and *The Seven Crystal Balls/Prisoners of the Sun*.

When the comics magazine *Tintin* was launched on 26th September 1946, it included Jacobs' story *Le secret de l'Espadon* (*The Secret of the Swordfish*). This story would be the first in the Blake and Mortimer series.

The characters of Captain Francis Blake, dashing head of MI5, his friend Professor Philip Mortimer, a nuclear physicist, and their sworn enemy Colonel Olrik became legendary heroes of the 9th art in the long-running series.

After Jacobs' death in 1987, Bob de Moor completed his unfinished last story. In the mid-1990s, the series was continued by the Jacobs Studios with two teams of writers and artists: Van Hamme/Benoit and Sente/Juillard.



ORIGINAL FRENCH EDITION		
1	1950	Le secret de l'Espadon, T1
2	1953	Le secret de l'Espadon, T2
3	1953	Le secret de l'Espadon, T3
4	1954	Le mystère de la Grande Pyramide, T1
5	1955	Le mystère de la Grande Pyramide, T2
6	1956	La marque Jaune
7	1957	L'énigme de l'Atlantide
8	1959	S.O.S. Météores
9	1962	Le piège diabolique
10	1967	L'affaire du collier
11	1971	Les trois formules du professeur Satō, T1
12	1990	Les trois formules du professeur Satō, T2 (Jacobs/De Moor)
13	1996	L'affaire Francis Blake (Van Hamme/Benoit)
14	2000	La machination Voronov (Sente/Juillard)
15	2001	L'étrange rendez-vous (Van Hamme/Benoit)
16	2003	Les sarcophages du Sixième Continent, T1 (Sente/Juillard)
17	2004	Les sarcophages du Sixième Continent, T2 (Sente/Juillard)
18	2008	Le sanctuaire du Gondwana (Sente/Juillard)
19	2009	La malédiction des 30 deniers, T1 (Van Hamme/Sterne/De Spiegeleer)
20	2010	La malédiction des 30 deniers, T2 (Van Hamme/Aubin)

CINEBOOK EDITION		
15	2013	The Secret of the Swordfish, Part 1
16	2013	The Secret of the Swordfish, Part 2
17	2013	The Secret of the Swordfish, Part 3
2	2007	The Mystery of the Great Pyramid, Part 1
3	2008	The Mystery of the Great Pyramid, Part 2
1	2007	The Yellow "M"
12	2012	Atlantis Mystery
6	2009	S.O.S. Meteors
		The Time Trap
7	2010	The Affair of the Necklace
		Professor Satō's Three Formulas, Part 1
		Professor Satō's Three Formulas, Part 2
4	2008	The Francis Blake Affair
8	2010	The Voronov Plot
5	2009	The Strange Encounter
9	2011	The Sarcophagi of the Sixth Continent, Part 1
10	2011	The Sarcophagi of the Sixth Continent, Part 2
11	2011	The Gondwana Shrine
13	2012	The Curse of the 30 Pieces of Silver, Part 1
14	2012	The Curse of the 30 Pieces of Silver, Part 2

Original title: La malédiction des trente deniers tome 2

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